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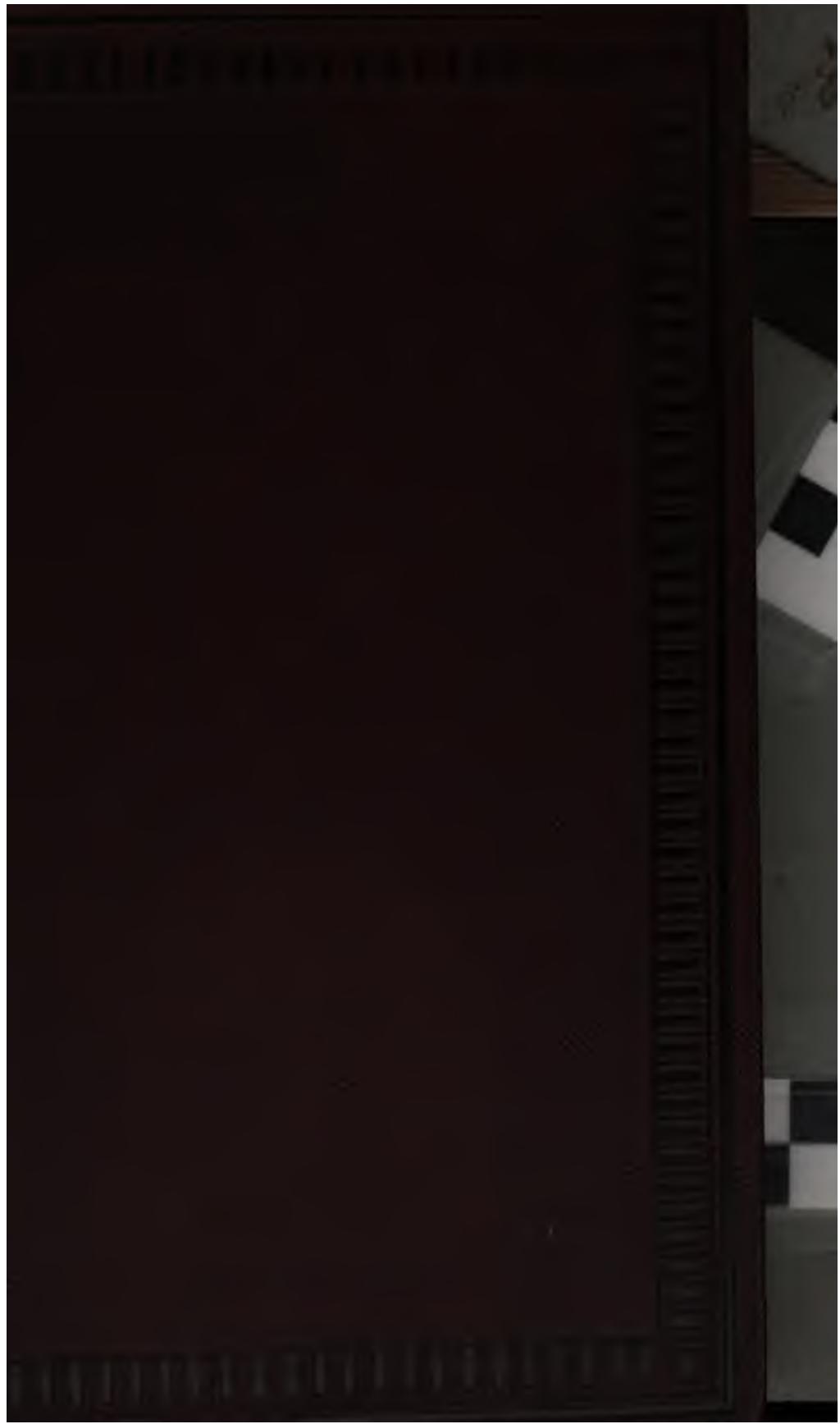
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SPEECHES AND ADDRESSES

OF

EDWARD HENRY XVTH EARL OF DERBY, K.G.

VOL. II.

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OF
EDWARD HENRY XVTH EARL OF DERBY
K.G.

SELECTED AND EDITED BY
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XLIV

THE COMMERCIAL DEPRESSION—THE CAUSES AND THE REMEDIES

ROCHDALE : JANUARY 2, 1879

I THANK you for a reception of which I can truly say that its warmth and cordiality will not easily be effaced from my recollection. I came here as a stranger, having no personal claim upon you except that of an old Lancashire connection, but you have been kind enough to welcome me as a country neighbour of whom you may occasionally have heard, and also—though I know that here I address a non-political audience—you have received me, I think, as a public man, and as one engaged in political life with whose opinions upon particular questions you may or may not agree, but whom you are willing at least to credit with an honest endeavour to do his duty in circumstances not always easy or agreeable. I am glad to observe, and I do not notice it now for the first time, that in these great northern towns—and not in the great towns alone, but in villages also—workmen's clubs of this description are being established, which show by their number that there is a real demand for those opportunities of social intercourse and of rational enjoyment which they can offer. That is a satisfactory and a hopeful sign, and I notice it with the more pleasure because we must admit that at this moment the sky is full of clouds. There are many signs around us of a state of things which is neither hopeful nor satisfactory, and I think I shall best fulfil the purpose of our meeting if I venture to trouble you with a few words on the subject of the condition in which we now find ourselves. Although the present state of affairs is unsatisfactory enough,

we must not be led away by what we hear or even by what is passing before our eyes to take an exaggerated view of its dangers. Up to the beginning of the late hard weather, there was little, if any, increase of pauperism, and even now the returns of the internal consumption, and the savings banks deposits, which, on the whole, have increased during the year, do not indicate so utter a collapse of national industry and prosperity as is in many quarters believed to exist. A few weeks of suffering, borne as they have been with the silent uncomplaining endurance which is part of our national character, do not justify us in speaking as if the days of English prosperity were numbered. Still, after making all allowances for exaggeration, there is no use in denying the fact that we are face to face with an industrial crisis such as we have not seen since the days of the cotton famine. It is, I hope, less intense than that was; but, on the other hand, it is more widely spread, and affects more numerous industries; neither have we the same certainty of its being due to a merely temporary cause.

I do not pretend to be able to tell you anything new as to the causes of the state of things which we see around us. They are, I think, various, and, coming at the same time, they have produced results for which no one of them singly would account. In the first place, we have had over-trading. Prosperity, it has often been said, creates competition, and competition kills prosperity. You all know how constantly it happens that a man who has made a large capital in his business, instead of leaving off with a competence, proceeds at once to invest his gains in doubling the extent of his concern. That operation cannot go on for ever. If we make, say, twice as many stockings as we made ten years ago, it does not follow that there will be twice as many legs to put them upon. A time comes when more is being produced than the market will take, and a reaction follows of low prices and low wages. I note that state of things without any idea that it is likely to be altered. To stop halfway in anything, to leave off without the most complete success that circum-

stances allow, is not our English nature, and still less is it Lancashire nature. All I say about it is this—that those who play double or quits must expect occasional heavy losses ; but it is unfortunate that the losses should fall on others besides themselves. There is another cause more especially operative of late years, and it is this. The classes that have money to invest are in this country more easily gulled out of it than anywhere else ; and neither Honduras loans, Venezuelan loans, Turkish loans, Spanish loans, nor anything that promises high interest comes amiss to them. I believe that if a few years ago the King of Dahomey had wanted a loan he would have got one. I almost wonder that he did not try ; but probably he was too much of a savage to see the advantage of being in debt.

The estimate has been made—I never verified it, but I believe it has been made on good authority—that English capitalists have lent more than 300 millions sterling to States which will never pay them a shilling. A great deal more, no doubt, has been wasted in private speculations abroad. Now, as long as such a period of free lending goes on, trade is artificially stimulated here. A South American Government, perhaps, raises four or five millions, and proceeds to spend it—after deducting what financial agents have stolen by the way—in building ironclads or in making railways. The ships or the rails, as the case may be, are constructed here ; but when that money is spent, and when the borrowing State finds that it can raise no more, it ceases to indulge in the extravagance of paying interest to its creditors, and at the same time the demand for ironclads or rails stops all of a sudden. That has happened with a remarkable frequency during the last few years, and we have had in consequence a most useful and valuable Parliamentary exposure by Sir Henry James of a few of the most rotten of these transactions. Here, again, I see no remedy, except that kind of wisdom which is only learnt by experience. I have never, for my part, understood why Governments are preferred as debtors to individuals, the fact being that they are precisely the one

class of debtors who need not and do not pay unless it suits their convenience. Other causes of distress have been of a more local and temporary character. The world is curiously linked together, and I do not doubt but that many an English child has gone to bed without supper because of the famine which ravaged whole provinces in China and of the dearth which has impoverished a large part of India. But you must add to the list other agencies which are more within our control. I am afraid it is impossible to resist the evidence that in some branches of business competition has assumed the ugly form of adulteration or deception, and of merely apparent cheapness, so that in consequence the good quality of British goods is not so readily taken for granted as in former days.

I am not at all a believer in what are called ‘good old times.’ Most abuses are old; but what is new is the eye trained to detect them and the conscience that revolts against them. But in this particular matter I think it is clear that we have been getting worse rather than better. There, at least, we see our way to amend what is amiss, and it will be our own fault if that reproach continues. It is not so easy to give a judgment on the question of foreign competition or to say how far it has really injured us as yet. I know that some very capable judges believe it to be a very formidable rock ahead, while others, equally competent, treat it lightly. My judgment is worth little; but if I were to give one, I should lean rather to the sanguine than to the despondent side. In regard to coal, capital, and effective labour, we can hold our own against any country. Let me just observe in passing that the common fear of being outdone by cheapness of labour abroad seems to refute itself, for it is admitted that our most dangerous rivals are the people of the United States, and yet that is the one country where wages are higher than in England. But, after all, we have no right to expect a monopoly in the business of clothing the world, nor yet in making iron and steel for all mankind. That is a position which we can hardly claim to acquire, and which, if we had it, could

only be held, even for a time, by the most uncertain and precarious of all possible tenures. There is enough work for foreigners and for us too ; and believing, as I suppose we do here, that sooner or later in human affairs reason will get the upper hand, I look forward confidently to a not distant date when this mania of restrictive tariffs, which seems just now to be spreading among other nations and our own colonies, will give way before the general experience of its practical failure. Of one thing I am quite sure, that any attempt on our part to restore trade by reverting to a system of protection—reciprocity, I believe, is the new term for it—would be a disastrous policy.

Our best chance of establishing free trade abroad is to show that we believe in it at home. To go back from our present position, apart from all other objections, would be accepted as an admission that the foreigner has been right and we ourselves wrong. Besides, any restriction on imports, established nominally to serve a temporary purpose, would be sure to create interests dependent upon those restrictions, which would make their abolition difficult when they had served their immediate purpose. The last cause of distress is one which I can barely touch upon in this room, lest I should seem to do so with an object which is foreign to the purpose of our meeting. Till we can have some evidence that peace will be kept in Europe, it is idle to expect that trade will revive. As a fact, whatever the cause may be, confidence does not exist. We all profess to wish for peace, and I hope most of us do so sincerely ; but do not let us forget that in a country like this there are interests which tend steadily and constantly in an opposite direction.

I am not referring to politics or to parties, but to social tendencies which will operate equally whatever Ministry or party is in power. In the first place, we have a more numerous and more highly trained military class than we ever had before. There is a keener professional feeling among English officers than in days when military teaching was less attended to. There is a natural and a not discredit-

able desire among them to test the value of what they have been learning, and to acquire the professional distinction which can only come from actual service. They are much more a writing class than they were ; they have learnt to use the press instead of treating it with contempt ; and when you recollect that there is in what are called the upper classes scarcely a family that has not some connection with the army, you must recognise a social influence which tells powerfully when questions of war or peace are in the balance. Then you have a large number of persons in the business classes to whom war is a profitable speculation. A campaign involves an enormous outlay, and of that outlay a good deal remains in the hands of those who supply the special articles required in war. Ships are wanted for transport, guns, rifles, armour-plates, stores of every description, horses ; and that vast demand, however dearly it has to be paid for by the community as a whole, gives a temporary stimulus to industry and makes a good many private fortunes.

I can only touch on this in passing, though it is a subject well worth looking into in detail. But there is more behind. You have always a certain number of interests, not of course always the same, which may be described as threatened interests. Those who represent them are expecting Parliamentary interference of some kind, and look forward to it with about as much pleasure as a patient in the surgeon's hands looks forward to an operation without chloroform. They will do anything to gain time, and to persons so situated no event is more welcome than a state of things which, even if only for a year or two, concentrates all attention on foreign affairs and puts what is passing at home out of people's heads. I speak purposely in vague terms to avoid offence, but you will understand me, and you will perceive that it is a mere delusion to say, as people are constantly saying, that everybody is against war if it can be honourably avoided. On the contrary, there are a good many persons who think either that they will make a very good thing out of a war, or that it will serve to keep off something that they dislike even more ;

and in either case we must not be surprised if they act according to their convictions. It is no use being angry with them ; they do only after their kind ; but let us clearly see where the danger lies and not deny its existence.

Some of you may be surprised that in referring to the cause of our present troubles I have said nothing about unduly high wages and the demands made on employers by the employed. I have left the question alone for two reasons—first, because I believe its importance has been enormously exaggerated ; and, next, because the evil, if it is an evil, tends to correct itself. When there are large new gains to be divided between masters and men it is hardly possible that they should ascertain except by actual trial what is the fair share of each, and it is almost certain that, in the first instance, they will differ ; but, as matters now are, the question for us all to solve is rather how by joint action to mitigate disaster than how to apportion our relative shares of advantages gained. It is not a moment to stand out on either side for extreme rights, but to keep together our resources and reserve our energies for the return of better times.

You will, no doubt, in the next few months have every variety of wild and foolish proposals put before you. You will be invited by some people, as I said before, to return to a protective system under the disguise of reciprocity. That is a suggestion of which your good sense will make short work. You will hear from others, no doubt, that all manufacturing industries are overstocked, and that a part of the population of our towns ought to go back on the land as occupiers or owners. Of that expedient I speak with more respect, but I confess it does not seem to me a very hopeful one. We may probably have changes in the land laws within the next few years, but, though they may lead to more careful and profitable cultivation of the soil, they are very unlikely to lead to a larger number of persons being employed upon it. The small freeholder and the very small occupier have never held their own in England any more than the hand-loom weaver

against the competition of the power-loom. I think it will be so still. For my part I think the future will in that respect be like the past ; but many people take a different view, and to them I say the experiment is very easily tried. There are plenty of acres to be had and plenty of owners willing to sell ; let those who have faith in what is called ' peasant proprietorship ' go into the market, form a company, buy land and divide it into lots of the size they think most suitable. If they fail to find purchasers, we shall know that the supposed demand does not exist ; if they succeed, they will have done useful service ; and in any case they will have practically tested the soundness of a theory that has never yet been either verified or refuted.

Though I do not hold that there is much of an opening for working men on the land at home, I do not say the same of land elsewhere. I think it is a very fair question whether in this little island of ours we are not getting packed too closely, and whether we have not suffered from the comparative stoppage of emigration in the last few years. Emigration is for a people like ours a natural and even a necessary outlet. You may pass what laws you please, you may lighten the labour of taxation, until the working men are practically exempt ; but as long as there are more of them than can get work, and as long as two men are looking after one employer, neither votes nor freedom from taxes, nor anything else that politicians can do, nor yet any expedient of their own for producing artificial scarcity of labour in special employments, will in the long run prevent them from being badly off. I am not contending that any of you should start off for the New World without inquiry as to the chances when you get there. Just now the Americans have their troubles as well as ourselves ; but with their boundless soil they are rapidly accumulating capital, and with their exceptional energy they are sure to rally before long, and, indeed, I believe the rally has already begun. There are children living who will probably see the United States numbering 200,000,000 of inhabitants ; and I do not think there is any subject to which leaders of

working men can more usefully turn their attention than the supplying to those who want it here accurate and trustworthy intelligence as to their chances beyond the Atlantic, either north or south of the Canadian boundary-line.

We shall always have men enough left at home; and even if emigration were to go to the length of checking the increase here, which it almost certainly will, it is better to have 35,000,000 of human beings leading useful and intelligent lives, than 40,000,000 struggling painfully for a bare subsistence. There are many persons, I know, who will object on the ground that, though emigration may be good for the individual, it weakens the State. I cannot take that view. A contented people goes a long way towards making a State powerful; and I have always been convinced that a great deal of our freedom from international trouble in this country, which we sometimes ascribe to national character, and sometimes to our political constitution, is really due to the various outlets which, both in past and present times, we have created for ourselves beyond sea. They are our safety-valves, and if they get choked, I should expect the result to be uncomfortable.

There is one other matter on which I hope I may say a word without offence. I am not going to give you a lecture on what is called teetotalism. If that rule of life be a duty for one class, it is equally a duty for all; and I have never seen my way to the conclusion that it is a duty, though I honour those who, for the sake of example and social usefulness, sacrifice a lawful indulgence. But not the less the fact remains, that if the quantity of liquor and tobacco consumed in the British Islands were reduced by one-half, besides all other incidental advantages, you would effect a reduction in taxation, mainly for the benefit of the working classes, to the amount of 20 millions sterling. The figures are public and well known, and I take them as given for last year. You pay 40½ millions of taxes in customs and excise for those articles alone, which is very convenient for persons interested in a large national outlay, and there are a good many of them. They will never find any other tax that will be paid

with so little inquiry ; but if we could only manage that little reduction of one-half—which, after all, does not imply the adoption of very ascetic habits by our people—do not you think that, besides the gain in comfort and health, besides having fewer paupers and less work for the police, we shall have done something for public economy and something for the cause of peace ? This is a matter for the people more than for the State. The State, I think, is often injudiciously accused. It does not force or induce men to drink, but, on the contrary, fines them pretty heavily for so doing. A working man who is a teetotaler pays lower taxes here than in any other country in the world ; in fact, except on his tea or coffee, he hardly pays taxes at all. It is in his power to emancipate himself almost entirely from the taxgatherer if he chooses ; while, by his vote, he retains power over the national outlay. To what extent he will do so depends upon himself and on his own class. I say advisedly on his own class, because in practice, as we know, it is the opinion of those with whom we are daily and habitually associated that influences our lives. I tell you, therefore, as working men, that if you wish your class to have social power corresponding to the political power which you now possess, you must bring your opinion effectually to bear upon this question of temperance. It is a collective quite as much as an individual interest. All reforms are akin, and of all reforms that lie ready to your hand, it is the most urgent, the most practical.

One word, in conclusion, on a more agreeable subject. Among all English communities Rochdale has the honourable distinction of being that in which the great industrial movement of co-operation was the earliest and most successfully worked. The men who founded the Equitable Pioneers Society will be remembered when many who have made more noise in their time are forgotten. I am glad to learn that that powerful organisation has, at any rate so far, suffered but little from bad times. Co-operation will not work miracles, and co-operative institutions will fail like others if they are worked with too little capital or with borrowed capital, or by men who do not understand their business ; but,

whatever may happen in particular cases, I believe that the principles which lie at the root of the movement are sound. I read them in this way : first of all there is no credit, and therefore no bad debts ; honest, careful men, who have their money ready to the day, are not to be made to pay double because spendthrifts and squanderers cannot be got to pay at all. Next, there is no adulteration, the buyers and sellers being the same body of men, and having no inducement to cheat themselves ; and, thirdly, men who give their labour to the concern have a direct interest in the result, and work under the stimulus of that feeling that they are working for themselves. If I am right in thinking that these, broadly stated, are the principles of the co-operative movement, they are right, and will stand the test of an adversity even more severe than that of the next few months or years is likely to be. They may not do all which their promoters expect ; they may not transform or regenerate society ; but they will effect a really useful and permanent improvement in our social condition ; and to this town and to this district the credit of having originated that improvement will be largely due. I must ask you to pardon me if, in the hope that I might make these remarks of some use, I have made them rather dry. I do not wish to dogmatise on the questions I have tried to deal with. I do not tell you, ‘This is so, and you must take it as an absolutely certain truth.’ I only say, ‘This seems to me so, use your own judgment upon it.’ We none of us know what this new year may bring ; but if we can keep peace abroad ; if we listen to no quackish remedies for our present difficulties, but fight them by the only available means open to us—patience, judicious sympathy, and help, and public and private economy wherever the relief of distress is not concerned—the next anniversary of this Club may be held under happier auspices, and we may look back upon the year 1879 as one which, if less prosperous than many of its predecessors, yet brought with it this compensation—that it braced up our energies to manly endurance, and helped to prove to ourselves and to the world that we are really a united people.

XLV

*AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION—PROTECTION—LOCAL
TAXATION—SMALL FREEHOLDERS—LARGE
AND SMALL ESTATES—RELATIONS OF LAND-
LORD AND TENANT—GAME LAWS—UNEX-
HAUSTED IMPROVEMENTS*

MEETING OF LANCASHIRE FARMERS' CLUB AND CHAMBER OF AGRICULTURE
LIVERPOOL: JUNE 14, 1879

I HAVE come here at the request of the Lancashire Farmers' Club, many of whose members think it desirable that we should confer together as to the present state of the agricultural interest, which is admitted to be unsatisfactory, and as to what, if anything, can be done for its advantage—that being a matter on which a very wide diversity of opinion prevails. Now, gentlemen, in the first place, are we to consider that the distress which prevails among farmers is likely to be permanent, or is it temporary in its character? That is a question on which a good deal depends, and which it is not easy to answer with certainty. I incline to the more hopeful view, and for this reason. We have had, in the last two or three years, a combination of circumstances which are not likely to recur all together. We have had, generally speaking, bad harvests at home. We have had during the same time abundant supplies from abroad, which, to the general public, is, of course, a gain, but which has robbed the farmer of his usual compensation for short crops—a high price for his produce. He has sold little, and he has sold that little cheap. We have had great industrial depression, the causes of which do not concern us here, but the effect of which on the demand for agricultural produce has been very perceptible. Further, we have lived for a long time in constant apprehension of war on a large scale, and we have

actually been engaged in two wars on a small scale. Now, any one of these troubles may occur again, and probably will, but it is very long odds that we do not have them all, one on the back of the other. No doubt there is plausibility in the argument of those who contend that we are only now experiencing the effect of the free-trade measures of thirty years ago. It takes time, they tell us, to develop a new industry and to organise the means of transit, but they say that this is now done, and that the British farmer can never again compete successfully against the growers of corn in California and on the western prairies, to say nothing of countries still more distant. Possibly those who speak in that sense may be right, at least so far as corn is concerned, for corn is easily transported, easily stored, and will keep. But I do not think we need be discouraged as yet by anything that we have seen as to the import of foreign cattle. In meat, and milk and vegetables, and some other articles of produce, we ought to be able to hold our own. If we have against us cheapness and abundance of land in other quarters of the globe, we have in our favour nearness to the market ; and even ocean steamers will not reduce the Atlantic to a mere ferry. Generally, I should put it in this way—in respect of those things which will not bear keeping we have a natural protection against the foreigner ; in respect of produce, the cultivation of which requires minute care and personal oversight, such as can be given on the small highly cultivated farm at home, and in respect of labour, which is now comparatively cheap—I mean in comparison with that of the Colonies—we possess advantages which we are not likely to lose. But looking to the present only, it is impossible to deny that in some parts of England farmers have great reason to complain.

When I hear, as I did the other day, of one land-owner who has fourteen farms on his hands, and another who has eight or ten, it is impossible to doubt that there must be real distress, for the farmer is not naturally locomotive, and will usually bear a good deal rather than throw up his holding. But I should like more information than I possess as to the

area over which this serious depression prevails. In these parts I hear nothing of farms thrown up, or of farmers unable to go on. On my estates I have not a single holding vacant, and hardly any arrears; and from what I hear as to the affairs of my neighbours, I believe other large land-owners in South Lancashire are in the same fortunate position. This makes me suspect there is some over-colouring in the pictures of agricultural ruin which I see so freely drawn. I have my suspicions that not all those tenants in more southern districts who have offered to throw up their farms either expect or wish to be taken at their word. And where a tenant sees his way to a probable reduction of rent, he is not likely in his public utterances to take a rose-coloured view of his prospects. Still, allowing for some natural exaggeration, there is no doubt that the distress about which so much is said is severe in some counties, real in most, and felt to some extent, though it may be but slightly, in all; and the question is, What are we to do for ourselves, or what are we to ask Parliament to do for us?

Gentlemen, there are some suggested remedies which it is only necessary to mention in order to put them out of the way. Nobody in Lancashire is likely to ask for a return to protection, and I think what has passed in Parliament this year is enough to show farmers everywhere that it is mere waste of time to cry out for help of that sort. Even those who talk about reciprocity and the protection of British industry as regards other branches of production, admit that imported food cannot again be taxed.

So we may pass on to something more practical. One of the subjects most frequently discussed by Chambers of Agriculture and farmers' meetings is the incidence of local taxation. Local taxes, it is said, fall more heavily on land than on other kinds of property. I am not concerned to deny that, nor do I undertake to prove that their incidence is, in all respects, perfectly just; but I am compelled, against my own interest, to point out to you that the farmer, though certainly he is concerned, is not the person primarily concerned in this

matter. No doubt he pays rates in the first instance. No doubt where they have been considerably raised within a few years, so that there has been no time for a readjustment of rents, he is the sufferer ; and I am aware that this has happened in many instances, and given rise to much legitimate complaint. But we have to look further forward than a year or two, and if all rates whatever were taken off he would not be a gainer in the long run. When the next valuation of the estate took place, the absence of those local burdens would be an element of increased value, and what was taken off from rates would fairly enough be added on in rent. And the same argument applies to the various proposals which we hear of from time to time for putting rates on to the owner instead of the occupier. No shifting of burdens of that kind lasts longer than the expiration of existing leases ; for when a fresh bargain has to be made, freedom from rates will be an item to be taken into account. And I might carry the matter further, and say that where rents are moderate and of old standing it is not generally the interest of the tenant to bring about changes which will of necessity compel revaluation. But I do not dwell upon that. It is enough for my purpose to contend that all increase of local charges falls ultimately on the owner, all reduction of them is for his ultimate advantage—although obviously if such charges are increased until they crush and pauperise the owner, the tenant suffers also from his landlord's inability to expend capital on the estate. But short of that, rate, as I apprehend, is simply a reduction from rent, and the only farmer who will gain permanently by its being lessened is the farmer who cultivates his own land. The same remark applies to a burden upon land of which we do not hear much in these parts, since locally it does not affect us. I mean the malt tax. No doubt it is a heavy charge upon a certain class of lands, and has the inconvenience of falling unequally on different parts of the country ; but it is not a charge on the farmer except in the same sense as rent is so. Take away the tax and the landlord pockets the difference. On that ground I have never been able to support

the agitation for its removal, which, however, of late years has greatly subsided. The British landlord is pitying himself a good deal just now, but I do not know that he gets much sympathy outside his own class; and certainly he will have too much sense to ask for a reduction of taxation in his special favour.

Gentlemen, I pass over some subjects of inquiry bearing on the future of the land, not because they are unimportant or unpractical, or because they would be out of place here, but simply because they would take us further than our time allows. I will not do more than touch upon the question, deeply interesting as it is, whether we should make matters better by establishing, if we can do it, a class of cultivators who shall be also freeholders. I am only repeating what I have said more than once before, when I tell you that I should like to see this experiment fairly tried. There is land enough in the market; and if a few capitalists choose to join, buy an estate, and divide it into small lots, they may practically test the question by selling these off, letting the purchasers pay by instalments spread over a long term of years. There is no difficulty in the thing, and you want no new law to try it. There is a certain risk to those who make the trial, but it will be well worth while to know by actual experiment whether there really is a demand for land on the part of that class who cannot afford to buy more than a few acres. The obvious advantage gained, if the experiment succeeds, is that such owners will work on their own ground more zealously than they will on anybody else's. The equally obvious drawback is that purchasers of the class we are speaking of would not only have no spare capital to expend on the soil, but, until they had paid off the purchase-money, would be in the position of very heavily encumbered owners. Between these opposite considerations only an actual trial, I think, can decide. But even if that solution be a practical one, it is one which would take generations to work out, and for you tenant farmers who do not want to buy your farms, and for the most part have not the capital to buy them, it is no solution at all.

For the same reason we may ignore the vexed question of large or small estates. I may be biassed by position, but the impression on my mind is that tenants generally prefer to be under a large rather than a small owner, because on estates of some magnitude there is more of an established system, more money proportionately is spent on improvements, and rents are generally fixed at a lower rate. But from the point of view of the cultivation, the farm and not the estate is the unit we have to do with. If, for example, the farms in a given district are each on an average about 100 acres in extent, it makes absolutely no difference to the way in which they are worked, whether one, or ten, or fifty are under the same landlord.

One exception only to that rule I would make. There are land-owners, though, I think, not many, who are owners only in name, whose estates really belong to their creditors, who are encumbered up to the eyes, and who are driven to press hard upon their tenants because they are hard pressed themselves. There is no doubt in my mind that the existence of that class of owner is a misfortune. If the present depression continues, matters will become worse and worse for such persons as I am describing, and the question may arise—I do not tell you that it has arisen yet—whether some such summary remedy as was applied by the Encumbered Estates Act in Ireland may not become necessary here. That is for Parliament and for the country to decide; in the meanwhile I would strongly warn land-owners against a common delusion that it is always better to hold on to an estate, however encumbered, rather than to sell, because the price of land is constantly rising. No doubt that has been the experience of the last fifty years, but it does not follow that the experience of the next fifty years may not be, on the whole, in an opposite direction. It is argued, I know, that in consequence of our existing land-laws owners cannot sell—that land is artificially locked up and kept out of the market. My experience and observation lead me to doubt that assertion. Wherever I happen to own landed property I generally hear of some neighbour anxious to part with his estate, and,

as a matter of fact, I believe at the present moment it is easier to buy an estate than to sell one. People have found out that there are better paying investments almost equally secure, and, in these days of expensive habits and diminished profits, they like 4 per cent. better than 2. I have been for many years in search of that fabulous being, the capitalist who can find no land to purchase, and I have ended by disbelieving in his existence.

Gentlemen, I pass to a subject which more directly concerns you and me. I mean the relations between landlord and tenant, starting from the basis of our actual land system, and considering what alterations of detail in it are possible or desirable. And on these matters I hope we shall speak frankly to one another, and not use phrases which are neither clearly defined nor capable of definition. I say so because I think a great deal of mischief is done by both parties to the discussion preferring to shelter themselves under general terms which each side interprets in its own favour. I have sometimes heard claims put forward, which nine out of ten of those who made them would have had too much sense of justice to advance if they had seen what was implied in them. In such cases it is best to state the objection at once rather than to keep it back for fear of giving offence. And, on the other hand, I believe farmers, or those who speak on their behalf, often seem, from the language which is put into their mouths, to be asking for more than they really mean or wish. I shall try for my part to speak plainly, and while I tell you what seems to me just and reasonable, I am quite open to conviction if you can show me that I am wrong. The English system is not like the Irish, as there are no questions of nationality or religion to complicate and embitter our mutual relations. Therefore we need not discuss such claims as those for fixity of tenure, compensation for disturbance, and the like, which are really only indirect ways of transferring the ownership from one person to another. The tenant who is legally irremovable so long as he pays a fixed rent is the real owner: he is simply in the position of

an owner burdened with a heavy mortgage. To be placed in that position is the Irish demand, and to the English mind, which acknowledges the landlord's reserved right of returning into possession of his own estate, that demand simply means taking away by law the property of A to give it to B.

The English tenant recognises the fact that his relation to his landlord is one of contract, and, if I understand the subject rightly, the difficulties which from time to time arise relate almost exclusively to matters for which the contract has not sufficiently provided. That view of the case suggests the remedy which will usually be effective—do not leave these points unprovided for when you enter on a farm. We sometimes hear it said, ‘Freedom to contract is all nonsense ; the parties are on too unequal terms ; the law must step in to protect the weaker side.’ Now, I do not meet that argument by a denial of the right of the State to interfere. It is very difficult to set bounds to the abstract right of the State. If Parliament may take from me as much as it pleases of my land to make a railway, it may undoubtedly assume a right to decide on what terms I shall let my farms. But the practical objections to legislative interference with contracts are exceedingly strong. Such interference is no new experiment of the present day. In the Middle Ages the State undertook to fix the wages of labour, with signal ill success. In much later days, almost within our recollection, the State intervened for the protection of the debtor, as it was supposed, and forbade capitalists to lend their money at more than five per cent. The result, as we all know, was that the law was evaded whenever lender or borrower agreed to evade it, and the debtor had to pay a heavy price for the risk which he compelled the creditor to incur. So I think it will be if you try to regulate by Act of Parliament the arrangements made between the man who has a farm to let and the man who wants to take it. If the incoming tenant is strong enough to make his own terms, he wants no protection ; if he is not, he will agree to any evasion of the legal conditions

which the owner may propose. Recollect that every owner has the choice of various expedients to escape from an obligation to which he objects. He may keep his lands in his own hands; and rich men, whose fortune is mostly in money, and who own estates rather for pleasure than profit, are likely to do so, if they find the alternative is to lose all control over them. He may again let it only to tenants who he knows are not able or not likely to insist on legal rights against him, and, of course, these will not be of the improving or independent class. Or, thirdly, he may fix a rent higher than he intends actually to receive, and keep the difference in reserve to be collected only in the event of a dispute between himself and his tenant.

Do not suppose that I am contending that it is desirable that such expedients should be resorted to, or that I am suggesting their use. I only want to show you what awkward questions will be raised, and what perplexities we shall get into, if once we drift away from the plain rule of ordinary life, that of letting the two parties to a bargain settle the terms between them. But I will go further, and say that there never was a time when it was less necessary for tenant farmers to ask the State to make contracts for them. In the present state of things they are masters of the situation. When farms are competed for, as they were and still are in Ireland, no doubt the owner can make his own conditions; but exactly the opposite is the case just now. With farms lying unoccupied all over the country, it is the farmer's own fault if he accepts a lease with provisions in it which he thinks objectionable. If he looks after his interest in that respect, he wants no help; if he does not choose or care to look after it, he deserves none. Now, gentlemen, the remarks which I have made as to leaving contracts free apply in principle to all of the three main subjects of agricultural discussion—restrictions on cultivation, game, and unexhausted improvements. But there are differences of detail, and a word on each may not be out of place. One of the demands often made by Chambers of Agriculture is for what they call

'free cultivation.' I do not think the phrase a happy one. Everybody is free to cultivate his own land as he pleases, and freedom by law to cultivate somebody else's land as the cultivator pleases means a transfer of ownership if it means anything. The question is hardly one for Parliament to deal with. So long as you leave an owner free not to let his land at all, or to let it to whomsoever he pleases, it is on the face of it inconsistent to forbid him to impose such restrictions on the cultivation as the tenant is willing to accept. But, looking at it as a matter not for legal interference but for private action, I do not doubt that there is a great deal of truth and force in the complaint that leases are often clogged with conditions not applicable to the wants of modern farming, probably not intended to be enforced, but which have been kept up merely by the force of routine, because nobody has taken the trouble to look into them and see how far they require to be modified. That is a grievance to which farmers' clubs are quite right in calling attention ; and as there is no real conflict of interest, and no feeling involved, I should imagine that the settlement of it is not likely to offer any serious difficulty.

As to game, what I have to say upon it will not take long. Everybody agrees that over-preserving is a nuisance—that you cannot have, and ought not to try to have, a warren and a food factory on the same ground. But the remedy is not so simple. I assume that few farmers wish to do away with game laws altogether. The effect of so doing would be, especially in these populous districts, to lay open your fields to perpetual trespass in search of game ; and popular feeling would not allow of the passing of a trespass law sufficiently severe to put an end to the nuisance. The result would be a worse state of things than you have now. Speaking for myself, I should have no objection to such a change in the law as would give the game to the tenant, in the absence of any agreement to the contrary ; but, as it would almost always be a subject of agreement, the change so made would be one rather of form than fact. Some people contend that

the landlord should have no power of reserving the game; but that would not only be an arbitrary restriction, it would be an altogether useless one, for the tenant having the game might let it, and he would naturally let it back again to the owner. To prohibit that would involve the absurdity that every owner would be able to shoot on his neighbour's lands, but not on his own; to allow it would leave things virtually as they are. It seems to me, therefore, rather a matter to be dealt with in detail than to be made the subject of any sweeping legislation. A tenant has a right to protection from all damage by game, greater than what he bargained for when he took the farm, and if any method can be devised for securing to him that protection more effectually than he has it now, I for one shall not object. I do not see that it is possible to deny that a farmer has a real grievance who takes a farm with very little game upon it, and finds the quantity doubled or trebled during his occupancy; though here, again, I must point out that the original cause of the mischief lies in the vagueness of the agreement, and that is a matter within his own power to remedy. Again, no remedy can be too prompt or efficient in the case of persons, whether owners or occupiers, who are injured by the game kept by their neighbours. In that case there is no dispute as to the wrong inflicted, and there ought to be as little as possible of delay or cost in redressing it.

Something is said in the report as to the shortness of the present notice to quit—six months wherever the new Act has not been brought into operation. I think, considering the character of modern farming, that complaint is a reasonable one. The practice recently adopted, as I am told, by most owners in this part of the country is to give twelve months. That is not an inconveniently long delay for the landlord re-entering into possession, and, I think, it might fairly be made the rule in all cases. As to unexhausted improvements, that is not a question which can be treated in a few sentences. As to the leading principles to be acted upon, there is, I think, no wide difference of opinion. No one wishes that the

landlord should confiscate the result of the tenant's outlay ; and, on the other hand, the landlord has a right to protect himself against having to pay for so-called improvements made by the tenant, which may be of no use to him, and may not add to the letting value of the farm. These are the two rocks between which we have to steer. I believe the last Act on the subject—the Act passed by the present Parliament—embodies as fair a solution of the points in dispute as we are likely to arrive at, and I am told, and I apprehend, that the results which it has produced are not to be measured by the extent to which it has been formally adopted. Even where, as no doubt has very generally happened, landlords and tenants have preferred to contract themselves out of it and to make their own arrangements, they have mostly followed the lines on which the Act is drawn ; and, considering the great varieties of custom in different parts of the country, I do not think it is surprising that they should not have chosen to bind themselves by a hard and fast rule.

But here again I must repeat what I said in another connection, most of the trouble on this question arises from want of care in the first instance, and what I may call a happy-go-lucky way of doing things, which is not business. I have more than once asked farmers why they had laid out their money without security, knowing perhaps that their farm was likely to go into the market, and generally the answer is that they do not know ; that they were drawn on to spend more than they meant at first ; and that they supposed they would be fairly dealt with, and that it would all come right. Well, if men will not exercise ordinary prudence the fault is their own when they suffer. The farmers have always been in a stronger position than they knew of ; they are now, in the actual state of the land market, stronger than they have been for many years past ; and if they only make up their own minds as to what terms they think fair in regard to this question of improvements, they require no help from outside. Landlords do not, as far as I could ever see, want to claim what is not their own. They have a

strong feeling in favour of settling such claims amicably and quietly ; and, apart from personal feeling and from a sense of justice, they are too much afraid of injuring their party and their class to be willing to quarrel with those who have the voting power, the electoral command of the counties, in their hands. I have never known any land-owner find fault with the principle of paying for unexhausted improvements ; what, I think, some are afraid of is lest the application of that principle should be made use of for the purpose of introducing indirectly the Irish demand for compensation for disturbance. But the two things are essentially distinct. The one is a claim founded on justice, the other rests on nothing, and the more absolutely you keep them apart the better.

My last word to you is this : Recollect that the relations of landlord and tenant in the long run will be regulated mainly by the need which each has of the other. If there are two farmers competing for every vacant holding, I do not care what the law may be, the owner of that holding will be master of the situation. If, on the other hand, two landlords are running after the same tenant, that tenant will be in the position of being able to make his own terms. You will spoil your own and each other's chances by being too thick on the ground. Now, the land of England capable of cultivation is a fixed quantity ; the size of holdings is not likely, on an average, to be reduced, and consequently there is not room for more farmers here. Let those who have sons whom they are bringing up to their business look outside this island. In America and Australia there will be room for centuries to come ; and in those countries, as long as a man is on good terms with himself, he cannot quarrel with his landlord. If he is active and enterprising he will get on in a new country better than he could in an old one, and by making a vacancy here he will do good instead of harm to those whom he leaves behind. It is a simple question of figures : keep down your numbers and you will keep down your rents. That is disinterested advice from a landlord, but it is truth, whoever says it.

XLVI

LOCAL PATRIOTISM—LOCAL HISTORY

OPENING OF THE PICTON READING ROOM, LIVERPOOL : OCTOBER 8, 1879

THE duty that now devolves upon me is one of a very agreeable character, and because it is agreeable, and because I know that the conclusion to which I am coming will be accepted by all present without elaborate reasons, my labour will be light and my speech will be short. I am about to ask you to drink the health of Mr. Picton, your old fellow-townsman, long tried in your service, and well known not only within, but beyond, the limits of Liverpool. It is not for me to relate in detail the vicissitudes of a career which has been laborious and successful, nor to dilate on the characteristic qualities of an intelligence equally energetic and versatile. But it is no secret to you that Mr. Picton has been the architect of his own fortune, as well as the architect of many other works which are more prominent before our eyes. That his position has been self-made, that it has been the result of hard and constant work, is not peculiar to him, for there is not a northern town which cannot produce similar examples; but what is less common is the continuous and careful attention which, in the intervals of a life abundantly occupied with private concerns, he has never failed to give to the public interests of his fellow-citizens. He has proved in his own case the truth of that often-repeated saying that ‘time is elastic, and nobody knows how much may be put into it until they try;’ that it is generally the busiest men who have most leisure for any really useful purpose, while it is the man who has nothing to do who never can find an hour to spare; and that work,

honest hard work, very seldom hurts anybody when it is not accompanied by worry or over-anxiety, or careless living.

But, gentlemen, it is not for the purely personal merits of unwearied industry and well-rewarded perseverance that we pay honour to our guest this evening, it is for the service which he has rendered to this community. Local patriotism, if I may use the term, is a quality which we cannot too carefully encourage; for of all kinds of patriotism it is at once the most needed and the least selfish. I have never feared that, as regards our great national affairs, there will be amongst English people any want of zeal and devotion. The excitement created by the handling of vast interests, the world-wide fame which is the result of Parliamentary labour when directed by real ability, the consciousness of acting a part on the historical stage, will always attract high intellect, and save our Imperial Senate from being vulgarised and degraded. But we have not quite the same security in municipal matters. They offer less to influence the imagination. They require in these days almost as diligent and minute attention, and the reputation which they confer is necessarily of a more local and limited character. You cannot attach too much importance to having your local affairs in the hands of men who wish to be really thinking what they can do for the town, not what the town can do for them. Anybody who has read of the exposure of the affairs of New York, at the time when a certain clique ruled there supreme, may see to what depths of corruption and jobbery it is possible for a great city to descend, when the most respectable and honest-minded men of all classes keep aloof from its affairs, and leave them in the hands of persons to whom they are only a profitable speculation. That, I think, is for English cities among the possible dangers of the future—a danger increased by the inevitable severance of classes in a great town, and by the disposition of those who have made money to leave the town for the country. And on other and more general grounds I say that we ought to do all in our power to maintain a strong feeling of what I may call municipal patriotism.

It is not good for any man to be occupied solely with his own affairs. That we all recognise. Every one, no doubt, has his duty to the country at large, but the claims of the nation upon all, except a few specially set apart for such work, are slight and far between. It is the city, the borough, or the parish which supplies the great majority of us with a possible and useful sphere of action. There are not half a dozen men in existence, if indeed there are so many, who can say of themselves with truth, 'If I had not lived English affairs would have taken a different course.' But there are thousands who may reflect, without self-illusion, and without vanity, that the condition of their immediate neighbourhood would have been widely different if they had not existed; and if it were possible, which happily it is not, so completely to centralise any country that there should remain no body, and no institution, intermediate between the individual and the State, I should say that such a country would lose the best possible training, if not the only training, for the transaction of public affairs on a large scale; and I should expect to find that its inhabitants, as a rule, would know scarcely any mean between fanatical devotion to a single idea, on the one hand, and lethargic indifference, on the other, to all public interests and ideas. I cannot wholly omit another point, because I believe it is characteristic of Mr. Picton's whole career. No man in Liverpool has more strenuously contended for the principle that in the choice for local office individual fitness should take precedence of party politics. I know that there may be some differences of opinion on that question in the abstract, and, therefore, though personally I believe Mr. Picton's view to be the right one, I do not here lay stress upon it.

But, gentlemen, if active public services be in course of time forgotten, as public services do get forgotten in the lapse of generations, that is a fate which need not be apprehended for the historian of Liverpool. I need not tell you that Mr. Picton's work is one of the most useful and successful of local topographies. No literary skill will make a topo-

graphical work as interesting to the casual reader as the last new novel by an eminent author, or the last collection of popular essays; but the local historian need not envy the novelist or the essayist. Their works hit the fancy and the fashion of the day; they have their vogue, and they disappear, whilst a record of local history which is accurate, which is graphic, and which relates to an important community, will rather gain than lose in value two or three centuries hence. Cities pass away, and if that Antipodean artist of the remote future whom Lord Macaulay has immortalised, after sketching the ruins of St. Paul's, should come northward to Liverpool, though he will no doubt find the Liverpool docks as little affected by time as an Egyptian pyramid or a Roman amphitheatre, he will perhaps discover for the rest only some ruins, not all of which he will greatly care to sketch. But the more effectually time does its work on brick and stone, the more valuable become the printed and engraved memorials of monuments which have disappeared, and of a civilisation which has fallen into decay. We need not look so far forward in this case; but changes are due to other causes besides that of decay. Unless the English race degenerates, and I do not see that it has begun to do so, we may be assured that the material progress, which for the last few years has been casually interrupted, will before long revive; that of that renewed prosperity we shall have our full share; and that the Liverpool of the twentieth or twenty-first will be something very different from that of the nineteenth century. Then men will realise, even more than they do now, the value of an exact and faithful reproduction of a vanished past. Then, as now, in the houses of Lancashire men, in the libraries of Lancashire towns, and not there alone, but throughout those of England, the work of Mr. Picton will preserve his name in connection with that of the great city of which he has been so long an inhabitant, an administrator, and a benefactor; and in seeking, as an artist and historian, to preserve the memory of others, he will have built the most effectual and lasting monument of himself.

XLVII

*INDUSTRIAL CONDITION OF ENGLAND—HOME AND
FOREIGN TRADE—TRADE WITH THE COLONIES—
SETTLEMENT OF TRADE DISPUTES—COMPANY
PROMOTING*

HUDDERSFIELD : JANUARY 8, 1880

I HAVE come here on your invitation and at your request to take part in a discussion on the industrial condition of the country, and, if courtesy had allowed, I should have preferred the attitude of a listener to that of a speaker. For it is no flattery to tell you that on subjects such as are dealt with in this Chamber of Commerce, your knowledge is, and must be, more practical, more detailed, and more accurate than mine. I can only suggest a few general considerations, and even these I put before you rather as questions for debate than as conclusions which I ask you to accept. That our industrial position at the present moment is unsatisfactory is a truism which nobody will dispute; but two circumstances, I think, may be noted which in some degree mitigate the evil. In the first place, we, the English nation, do not suffer alone. If we did, if our industry were decaying while that of other countries was prospering, a more despondent view would be permissible. But I do not see that we are worse off than our neighbours, or that we have fallen behind in the race. Perhaps we have been in too great a hurry all over the world to grow richer, and are paying the penalty of reckless speculation. But, at any rate, it is certain that France, the United States, and other countries have shared in the general decline and depression of the last few years.

Another source of satisfaction is that probably in all our history there has never been an industrial crisis which

involved so little acute suffering to the poorer class. No doubt they have suffered; wages have been lower, work has been scantier, pauperism, to some extent, has increased. But food has been cheap, and I think most of you who are middle-aged persons will agree with me that, as compared with the hard times of thirty-five or forty-five years ago, with the times of Chartism and of Corn Law controversies, there has been really nothing to speak of either in the way of general suffering or of general discontent. The crisis has been long, but it has not been severe. It has lasted long enough, at any rate, to give us time for reflection on our future prospects, and there are three questions which are being perpetually raised, and as to which it is desirable we should form for ourselves as clear an idea as we can as to how the truth stands. First, are we on the whole, as a community, growing richer or poorer? Second, what is the proportion which the profits on our foreign trade bear to the entire earnings of the nation? Third, is our foreign trade really falling off, or has it suffered only a slight and temporary check? Now, on each of these three points I should like to say a few words.

As to the first, the increasing or diminishing wealth of the nation, I will not conceal my belief that the prevalent opinion at the present time is more gloomy than the circumstances justify. You cannot judge by the results of a single year. You must take for your measure a longer interval of time. Go back only ten years, to January 1870, and ask yourselves whether since that date the British Islands have advanced or fallen back in material prosperity. We know what has happened. We know that the movement has been irregular, that three or four years of extraordinary growth have been followed by others of partial check and reaction. But take any test you please—the income-tax returns, the sums deposited in the savings banks, or the consumption of popular luxuries, such as tea, beer, and tobacco. You have in figures, which are public and in everybody's hands, conclusive evidence of advance and not of decline, and that after making full allowance for the growth of population in the interval. Man for man, the

people of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in this year 1880, possess a larger amount of property, a larger income in money or money's worth, than they did ten years ago. In 1870 the incomes liable to taxation were 445 millions; in 1877 they were 570 millions. In 1870 the sums deposited in savings banks were 53 millions; in 1878 they were 74 millions. In 1870 the quantity of tea imported for use at home was 117,000,000 lbs.; in 1878 it was 157,000,000 lbs. Now, about these figures there is no doubt nor ambiguity, and they are only taken as samples of many others. We are richer than we were ten years ago; for I suppose no one will contend that in the two or three years which have elapsed since the date of the last returns available we have lost as much ground as was gained in the preceding seven or eight. I need not press the point further. Many well-informed persons will tell you that, taking the country as a whole, there has been no such thing as a year of loss; that at the end of the worst years we have been collectively better off than at the beginning. But that assertion, perhaps, hardly admits of proof, and I do not urge it.

But one word more I will add. I believe we shall never rightly understand the industrial history of the years of inflation, 1871-72-73, and the reaction which has followed, unless we carefully bear in mind that a great deal of the apparent fluctuation both ways has been apparent only, and not real, so far as the community as a whole was concerned. I will explain what I mean. A sudden rise in the price of any particular article which is consumed at home adds to the wealth of one class and takes away from that of another. When coal, for instance, rose to three times its normal price, as for a time it did in Lancashire, the producers of coal made a very good thing; the buyers underwent a certain loss. But, inasmuch as the seller, if he is an honest man, returns to the Income Tax Commissioners the increased gains which he has made, while the buyer is not entitled to strike off anything from his return because he has to pay three times as much for his coal, the change -which really leaves the

community neither richer nor poorer, since the gain of A is exactly balanced by the loss of B—figures in official statistics as a genuine increase of wealth. That seems obvious enough when one states the case, but I think we are apt to overlook it in reasoning. To put the matter in other words, when you consider the enormous profits made by some classes in the years of abundance, you must, before you estimate the aggregate gain to the nation, deduct from those profits the corresponding losses of those who have had to buy dearer. And, conversely, since the fall in prices, you must set the increased advantage of the buyer against the diminished advantage of the seller. Life, I take it, is easier now to the possessor of a small fixed income than it was six or seven years ago. Look at it that way, and you will infer, on the one hand, that we were not really as rich as we thought ourselves in 1873, and, on the other, that we are not as poor as we are apt to think ourselves now.

Now, as to the next point, the proportionate importance of home and foreign trade, you will not, I am sure, suspect me of indifference to those vast commercial interests which it is the boast of England to have created in every quarter of the globe. But we can only gain by substituting precise statements, where that is possible, for vague generalities, and, freely admitting that I was not myself prepared for the result of statistical inquiry on this point, I think I am not unreasonable in supposing that a good many other persons may be in the same condition. What, then, is the aggregate of our national income, and in what proportion is it swelled respectively by home industry and foreign trade? That is at least an interesting inquiry, whatever results you deduce. We have no absolutely certain data to go upon, but we have data that carry us a long way. We have the income-tax returns, which are certain so far as they go, and accurate at least on one side, for we may be sure that they do not exaggerate. They have stood as high as 579 millions; and, allowing for the inevitable leakage, for the moral certainty which we have that in many cases they are lower than they should be, I see

no reason to doubt that our best statisticians are right when they fix the amount of incomes liable to taxation at an aggregate of not much less than 600 millions. When we come to deal with incomes not liable to taxation we are on less firm ground. The calculations which have been made are more complicated, and to some extent they are conjectural; but the general belief amongst those most competent to judge is that the incomes which are liable to tax and those which from their smallness escape it about balance one another in aggregate amount. That is the result arrived at by Mr. Dudley Baxter some years ago, and by Mr. Giffen in some remarkable essays. If they are right, you have a gross national income falling little short of 1,200 millions; but strike off, if you will, one-sixth of that amount as possible excess, and put it only at 1,000 millions. That is the whole. Now, how much does foreign trade bring in? That is a question which we can answer with a reasonable degree of certainty. Taking the whole value of British exports at 200 millions, which is a fair average, and deducting the price of the raw material imported from abroad, we have about 140 millions as the profit which remains in English hands. That is about one-seventh of the total aggregate income of the community. No doubt it is a large, even an enormous, figure—I may note, in passing, it would just about pay the national liquor bill—but it scarcely justifies the language which we often hear, as if the home trade were a comparatively trifling matter, and as if the industrial life or death of the nation depended on the keeping up of its exports.

And that brings me to a third part of the inquiry, is it or is it not the fact that our foreign trade is likely to fall off? Have we reached that point which soon or late must be reached by every nation in the course of its history, when material progress ceases, and material decadence begins? I do not believe it, and for various reasons. In the first place, what is being said now in that sense has been said a hundred times before in every temporary pause and interval of what has been a perpetually growing prosperity. That, of course,

does not in itself prove that the croakers who have been wrong twenty times before may not be right at last ; but it is a circumstance to be taken into account in judging of the value of their predictions. Then, I say, the evidence which is brought forward to prove a permanent depression in our foreign trade is utterly inadequate for that purpose. What does it come to ? Only this, that during four or five or six years at most our habitual progress has been arrested, as it has often been before. It is only a check, not a falling off. We produce as much as ever we did, only we have had to sell what we produce rather cheaper. ‘ But then,’ it is said, ‘ look at the competition that you are threatened with by foreign countries.’ Well, let us look at that competition. It is twofold : that of the United States and that of the Continent. As to the United States, I do not deny that they are or may be most formidable rivals. It is hard to put any limits, even in imagination, to the possible development of that wonderful country—forty Englands rolled into one, as somebody called it—to which, in all present appearance, if it only manages to hold together, the first place in the future of the world belongs. But for the present we do not find that the Americans themselves claim or expect to beat us in the open market. They do not come out and face us in the open, they fight entrenched up to the eyes, behind a protective tariff, and even with the help of that tariff they have not wholly checked the import of English manufactures into their own country. This does not look like confidence in their own unaided superiority, and in a country where land is so cheap it seems difficult not to suppose that the labour market must be affected unfavourably to the manufacturing employer by the counter-attractions of land-owning and farming. Still, making all these allowances, American competition is not to be lightly spoken of. All I say as to our rivals in that quarter is that there is room enough in the world for us both.

As to our Continental competitors, I have never yet been able to see what advantage they have over England. They have not got our cheap coal, they have not got our cheap

iron, they have not got our vast accumulated masses of capital, they have not got the almost unlimited command of mechanical appliances which is to be found in our great towns, nor the supply of trained workmen which never fails us in England. More than that, they have not got free labour, for labour is not free where, as now all over Europe, a young man is liable to be taken from the trade he is learning for three or four of the best years of his life, initiated into the vices of a camp, and sent back having forgotten all that is of use to him to know. And conscription is only the sign of a deeper-seated evil. The Continent, for the most part, is given over to great military Empires, and militarism cannot co-exist with industry on a great scale. One must destroy the other. Do you think that Emperors, and Grand Dukes, and Archdukes, Field Marshals, and great personages of that sort really want the manufacturing industries of their Empires to be developed? Do you suppose it would suit them to have to do with an intelligent, keen-witted, critical, and well-to-do population such as inhabit the northern towns of England? Depend upon it they are not such fools; they know their business better. What they want is something quite different—a peasantry hungry enough at home to find the ordinary life of a private soldier rather agreeable than otherwise, and submissive enough to be ready to shoot their own brothers, if ordered, without asking why.

No, gentlemen, each nation must lead its own life, and military Empires will never be industrial rivals. They may injure you by being bad customers, but they will not hurt you otherwise. We, in England, as I believe, are marked out by all our characteristic qualities for industrial supremacy, and, as far as Europe is concerned, I am not afraid lest we should lose it. No doubt the observation which I have made just now does not apply to the smaller and less ambitious communities of Europe; but they, too, have their own troubles. They are heavily weighted by the existence of land frontiers, and the consequent necessities of costly

defence. They suffer from the faults of other people, not from their own, but they suffer all the same.

But then it is argued that the whole world is shutting out our trade by protective tariffs, and our own Colonies are following the example. Now, let us look into that a little. As to the Colonies, is there a particle of evidence to show that they have really and definitely adopted the theory of protection? That they have tried it, or are trying it as an experiment in some cases, is certain; but if, as we believe, it is an experiment which must necessarily end in failure, why should that alarm us? No doubt each separate colonial interest would like to be protected; but when each interest finds that it can secure protection for itself only at the cost of paying for the protection afforded to every other interest, the supporters of each will soon begin to discover that it is possible to buy gold too dear. The process of disillusion, I am told, has already begun in Victoria, and when bubbles burst they do not burst gradually or by halves. I think, also, that we ought to allow more than we do for the difficulties of colonial finance. In a new country, where scarcely anybody has made his fortune, where there are very few luxuries, and no masses of accumulated wealth, internal taxation is not very easy or productive, and that is all the more the case where settlers live scattered far apart, making the collection of direct taxation difficult. A country in that condition is apt to rely on customs duties for a large part of its income, and to raise them without much inquiry as to whether they operate protectively or not. Clearly that is a cause for the existence in young countries of protectionist duties which will disappear as time goes on, as the lands become inhabited, and as the community increases in wealth. The only thing I fear with regard to the Colonies is lest we should spoil our own game by meddling prematurely. If anything would confirm the Australian and Canadian settlers in protectionist ideas, it would be the slightest semblance or suspicion of dictation from England in a contrary sense.

There is no jealousy more intensely sensitive than that of

British settlers beyond the seas in their relations with the mother country. They are perfectly loyal ; they are willing and even proud to call themselves British subjects, and to enjoy British protection (and they are quite right, for the arrangement, whilst it is the simple fulfilment of a duty on our part, is a very good one for them) ; but they remain with us, as I conceive, on the tacit understanding that they shall do exactly as they please, and that the nominal and honorary supremacy which we claim shall not be treated as a fact. They are, if I may use such a figure, like horses which run loose alongside the car of the State, but do not help to draw it. Therefore, all the talk which we sometimes hear about free trade within the British Empire—a great Imperial Zollverein—is simply inapplicable to the conditions under which we live. We cannot really regulate the conditions of commerce, except in these islands and in India, and in India we can do it only so far as the almost hopeless condition of finance in that country will allow us. But, if we cannot use authority where the Colonies are concerned, we can trust to reason and experience, which are much safer grounds to rely upon. I believe it is mainly the example of the United States which has influenced our Colonies ; and when they change, as they must, the smaller communities which look up to them will do the same. Meanwhile, let us remember this—that every doubt expressed as to our own course, every casual word of regret which is given to the abandonment of protective duties amongst ourselves, does harm outside England. If we seem to hesitate, how shall we convert those who are wavering ? If we do not believe in ourselves, how are we to make anybody else believe in us ? In a position such as ours it is much easier to point out the uselessness of popularly suggested remedies than to indicate others which may be more available. I have no great faith in diplomatic preaching, but something I suppose we may do by the combined action of our diplomatists and our manufacturers, when an opening is afforded by changes of tariffs in foreign States. France, Italy, Spain, and the smaller States generally are not indis-

solubly wedded to commercial restrictions ; and it does not follow that, because a principle which thirty years ago was entirely new has not made a conquest of Europe in one generation, its ultimate success is to be despaired of. With Spain, at least, we know we can negotiate by modifying our wine duties, whenever it is again our good luck to see such a thing as a financial surplus.

Something we may accomplish by lightening gradually the public burdens, which still press on our workers at home, though I am bound to admit that I do not think those burdens are many or heavy. Public and private economy tell in such a race as we have to run, and neither just at present is our strong point. We are a wasteful people taken as a whole, and by better social arrangements even lower money wages than are now paid, if the state of business should cause them to be lowered, may be made to go a good deal further in the way of comfort than they do now. Can we make anything more of the home market than we do ? I see in every great town a good many backs which do not seem very abundantly covered, and I fancy the woollen trade would receive a material stimulus if the owners of those backs did not prefer to keep themselves warm by internal applications. It is of no use to talk, as some people do, of going back to longer hours of work, because hours on the Continent are longer than here. This we may be assured that our people will not stand. There are steps which, once taken, cannot be retraced ; but if we cannot get more hours of work, cannot we put more into each hour ? Can we not make the day's labour of each individual man worth more than it is ? Mechanical invention has not said its last word, and when you have done all that you can do in that line the human part of the mechanism remains to be taken in hand, and to have its productive capacity developed to the utmost. This you are doing by the creation of that admirable technical school on which you have spent so much money and pains. Lastly, there is an immense problem to solve—can we do anything to lessen the waste of capital and labour in the perpetually recurring conflicts between the two ?

I know that the difficulty has hitherto been found all but insuperable. I know, also, that something may be set against the enormous loss caused by strikes, in the increase of labour-saving machinery which they have brought about. I was speaking only the other day to the leading partner in a great concern in which a strike had prevailed during the greater part of last year, and he told me casually that one result of that strike was that improved machinery was being introduced into the works which would dispense altogether with the labour of many men, and, in addition, would enable ordinary workers in other cases to take the place of skilled artisans. That process, I imagine, has been going on in all lines of business ever since manufactures began, and it has been to the employer a considerable mitigation of the inconvenience that he has undergone.

But I think we must all feel that, with the good sense and moderation which has been shown on both sides in England, it is not hopeless to look forward to a less costly and troublesome method of settling trade disputes than that which now prevails. If I were a manufacturer, I think I would rather encourage than discourage men with whom I had to do in setting up co-operative undertakings. They have very often failed, and they will very often fail again; but, depend upon it, no man has ever taken an active part in them without getting a clearer notion than he had before of the risks and responsibilities of an employer. Arbitration, again, is, I think, growing more and more in popular favour where questions of wages are concerned. It has its defects, no doubt; the award of the umpire cannot be enforced if either party refuses to accept it, and there is the difficulty which I have myself felt acutely when occupying the position of an umpire—that the process is a very arbitrary one. There is no law to administer; there is no exact right or wrong in the case; you have to judge, as best you can on the facts before you, what would probably be the result of a trial of strength between the contending parties. Still, with all these drawbacks, it is a useful if rough expedient, and we can only gain by its extended

adoption. Meanwhile, we have to recollect that our labour difficulties, grave as they may be, are not peculiar to this country. Our rivals feel them as much as we ; and they will feel them more seriously than we do, just in proportion as they call in the aid and interference of the State to settle matters which we leave to the free action of individuals.

There is one other matter of vast general interest, but upon which I hardly venture to touch. We all know what will happen when trade revives, as it is sure to do. The 'promoter' will be at his work again. Schemes will be launched by hundreds which have not one particle of honesty or reality about them, and which are perfectly well known to be intended for the benefit of no human being except those who get them up—which are, in fact, swindling transactions, and nothing else, whether the law can touch them or not. Is it absolutely necessary—is it quite a law of Nature that on these occasions the ignorant and credulous—a large part of all society, as we know—must be tempted on to ruin without an attempt to expose the fraud, under the eyes of hundreds of experienced men of business who know perfectly well what is going on ? We should be ashamed of looking on and seeing a man robbed in the street without attempting to interfere ; and where, morally, is the difference ? It is not the business of individuals to act as public prosecutors, and journalists are not always willing, and I do not see that they are bound, to risk prosecutions for libel by plain speaking ; but is it impossible that in such cases associations of men, acting directly or indirectly, should intervene, at least, by the suggestion of a few timely questions, or by an opportune word of warning publicly given ? I know well the difficulty of the subject, and the objections which may be made. All I tell you is that in a well-ordered society, where frauds such as I speak of are unpunished and successful, it is not answer enough for each man to say—'This is not my business, so I left it alone.' It might not be his business individually and singly—it is his business as a member of a community. The nation has lost millions directly by rascalities of this sort,

and indirectly it has lost a great deal more, because investors who have suffered by a rogue will not trust an honest man.

But, gentlemen, I am not here to propound to you any new method of getting over difficulties with which we are all, unhappily, familiar. I do not believe in short cuts to fortune. Labour, enterprise, and saving gave us the industrial position which we have earned, and those qualities alone can retain it. But we must know what we want. If we are going as a nation into the gunpowder and glory business—if we think the increased development of militarism a necessity of our position, do not let us hide from ourselves what one result at least will be. We may be successful and glorious. So we were in 1815, but I do not suppose that at any period in our history the English people have been so poor, so miserable, or so dissatisfied as they were in the fifteen or twenty years which followed Waterloo. But there is a difference between those times and the present. Sixty years ago the labourer and the artisan might suffer, but they had to submit; there was no escape for them. But now the seas are open, they need not even go outside the British Empire to escape from Imperial taxation and from European responsibilities. Australia and Canada will take them in, and be glad of their coming, while these countries will take very good care not to involve themselves further than they can help in European troubles. I think that is a circumstance which ought to be borne in mind if any question shall arise of military adventure not forced upon us by duty or by self-defence.

XLVIII

*SAVINGS BANKS—THE NATIONAL DEBT—
PENNY BANKS—FRUGALITY*

LIVERPOOL: JANUARY 16, 1880

I WAS asked as long ago as October last to deliver an address to the supporters and promoters of the Penny Banks in and around Liverpool. My first impulse was to refuse, feeling as I did, and do, that it is utterly impossible to tell you anything new or particularly worth hearing on the subject of Savings Banks; but I was told that my coming might be of use to a movement with which I heartily sympathise; and, further, I reflected that if nothing was to be uttered in public which had very often been heard before, though possibly the general public might gain, yet that new rule would be a sentence of professional ruin to some journalists, to many politicians, and, perhaps, to most popular preachers. Therefore I thought better of the matter, and I am here. And if what I say to you is chiefly in the line of what may be called benevolent commonplace, you must blame the subject at least as much as the speaker.

Now, as to the general question of savings banks; one is apt to ask, 'Why do they date, so to speak, only from yesterday?' How comes it that so very simple and unobjectionable an idea never got itself acted upon till fifty years ago? But I think the answer is easy. Savings banks are delicate plants which will only grow and thrive in a certain political temperature and climate. You cannot have them, to begin with, in any country that is despotically governed, where the Sovereign and the State are one. Nobody will put his spare cash into the hands of an individual who considers that he has a perfect right to keep it if he pleases. You must have a

Government controlled, in some form, by public opinion, before you can trust it with your earnings. So, again, you will not have savings banks, on any large scale, in a country liable to revolutionary outbreaks. I doubt if in any South American State, or perhaps even in Spain, you would find citizens willing to trust their cash to official hands. There must be security for order as well as freedom. Further, there must be a working class, which has emerged in the course of time from an absolutely dependent condition, and which has some education, and some hope of rising in the world. The very notion of laying by for old age or for children does not come into the head of a savage or a serf. Even in England, I am told that the rustic of the south occasionally reasons in a beerly manner, and says, 'The parish is bound to keep me when I am past work ; why should I lose my pleasure for the sake of saving the farmers' pockets?' You do not hear that kind of talk hereabouts, and you will not hear it anywhere when School Boards have done their work, and when every working man can read his newspaper.

Then, again, savings banks are rather an urban than a rural institution. A country thinly populated, and with habitations at wide distances, is not favourable to their creation or their growth, though that obstacle is less serious than the others. Still, if a man has to walk ten or twenty miles to make his deposit, as may happen in a Colony, or even in some out-of-the-way district at home, he is not always willing to take the trouble ; and if he starts on the journey it is a chance that, before he gets to the end, part of his stock will have gone down his throat in a liquid form. So you see the setting up of savings banks is not quite so simple a matter as it seems. I believe that when they were first established in England they met with a good deal of opposition, on very queer grounds, as it would seem to us now. One favourite taunt against their promoters was that they aimed at making the free-hearted generous English people mean and miserly. Others talked of the wretched state of the poor, not wholly without reason in those days ; and how the first thing to do was to

feed them better before you asked them to put by their wages; others, again, thought that the Poor Law was a poor man's substitute for a savings bank. Not a few disliked the whole movement, because they said dependence on the bounty of the rich was the natural reliance of the deserving poor; one class was made charitable by having its liberality appealed to; the other was kept humble by having to look up for help; and I dare say, though I do not know it, that then, as now, the publican said (rather in private, and to suitable hearers, than in public): 'If these new-fangled devices for saving come in, what is to become of our trade, and what is to become of the taxes on drink?' Well, so a good many of our great-grandfathers talked, and possibly to our great-grandchildren some of our modern utterances may not sound much wiser. But savings banks grew and flourished. They grew slowly in bad times—quickly in good times—but their growth was never arrested.

I need not point out to you how much the burden of the National Debt, heavy and vexatious as it must always be, would be practically lessened if a large part of it were owned in small sums by our working people at home—if it went, that is, to mitigate poverty and not to increase abundance. I will just mention incidentally another reason why it is exceedingly desirable that the deposits in savings banks should increase. They supply the most convenient method—the only convenient method that has yet been found—of enabling Parliament to reduce the mass of the national indebtedness by means of what are called terminable annuities. You would not thank me to explain the process; but every financier can tell you that that is the best, the surest, if not the only way of lightening that unpleasant legacy which the wisdom of our ancestors has bequeathed to us. We are paying now for the Duke of Marlborough's victories; and, though I hope we shall always pay up honestly, it is not satisfactory to think that, in 170 years, we have repaid the capital thus borrowed about 140 times over in interest, and that the principal remains still as a charge upon us. Depend

upon it, that question of national debts will be a serious one some day in Europe. They are steadily getting piled up higher (I speak of foreign countries—not of our own), and when the burden grows intolerable people will begin to ask questions, which are not quite easy to answer, as to the right of one generation to lay burdens in perpetuity on all posterity. So let us keep out of the mess by lightening our load while we can ; and, as I said before, for that purpose there is no such efficient machinery as that supplied by savings banks. I have never clearly understood why our savings banks are tied down so closely as to the amount which each depositor may invest in a year, or as to the total amount which he may hold. I have often asked the question, and the reasons given have been two—both, to my mind, very bad ones : one, lest the business of the ordinary banks should be interfered with, which I do not think it seriously would be, and, in any case, it is not the business of the State to secure them a monopoly ; the other, a graver objection, is that it may be a risk to the State to hold so much money at call, since, if everybody wished to be paid off at once, the funds would not be forthcoming. To this I think the answer is that it is only when a banker is distrusted, when he is thought likely to fail, that there is a run upon him ; and as the solvency of the State is not likely to be doubtful under any conceivable circumstances, there will never be a run on the State. And it is mere commonplace to say that the larger number of people you interest in keeping things quiet, the safer your social system will be. It is rather a troublesome business for a poor man who does not employ a banker to buy into the funds, and land is never likely to be a convenient investment for very small owners, because it wants personally looking after, while money once safely put away looks after itself. Therefore, speaking merely my personal opinion, I should like to see a considerable extension in the maximum which may be held by depositors—perhaps up to 500*l.* in all, and 100*l.* in any one year.¹

¹ The present limit (1894) is 200*l.* in all, and 30*l.* in a year.

This is hardly the time or place to refute popular fallacies on economical matters, else I should have liked to say a word about that queer delusion that leads some working men to fancy that accumulation of capital, even by their brother workers, is somehow hostile to them. The case is exactly the other way ; the more money there is in the country the cheaper the use of it will be, and the better the bargain for the poor man, who must work or trade with other people's capital. High interest—usury, as people used to call it—has been, in all ages, one of the standing grievances of the poor ; and high interest, when generally prevalent, and not due to any special insecurity in the investment, means only that capital is scarce—in other words, the people have not been accumulating. In India, at this day, the peasant who must borrow to cultivate his field has to borrow at 20 per cent., and once involved at that rate of interest he never gets free. If India were richer, if capital were more plentiful, the gains of the individual capitalist would be lessened. He would have to lend at 10 or 8 or even 5 per cent., but the worker would find his life proportionately easier. It is from the operation of the same principle that all great destructions of capital, such as arise from wars, are apt to be popular with owners of money, as such—of course, assuming that it is other people's money that is lost, and not theirs—because, where a great deal has been destroyed, what remains is worth more. So you see the work which these banks are doing is really tending to bring about a social change. You are obliging the capitalist to be content with lower interest, and making industrial employment, which depends on cheap capital, more abundant for the artisan and the labourer. . . . But you cannot have a large river without little rivers and brooks to feed it, and that useful office is performed in great part by the penny banks whose representatives come here to-night. Where the question is between thrift and self-indulgence, between saving and spending, delays are dangerous. There is a perilous interval between the time when a man gets paid off and the time when he puts by what he ought to be able to

spare. In a large town like this, to go to any one of the three offices of the bank may involve a long walk, and it is not an unreasonable wish on the part of the promoters of these Penny Savings Banks to make it as easy for a working man to invest in them as it is for him to invest in a glass of beer.

I am glad to see by the report just published that you have now 104 of these penny banks ; that they hold the money of 28,000 depositors, and that, in addition, they have transferred to the Central Bank over 5,000*l.* in the depositors' own names. It is impossible to do a more useful work, or to do it in a more unostentatious way. You, the working promoters of these banks, are the humble and obscure, but not less effective missionaries of a movement, which is essentially one in favour of civilisation. For, rely upon it, in all societies the thriftless class is really the dangerous class. It is not a question of social position. There is not much to choose between the poor Irish tenant, who is ripe for a revolution because he cannot pay his rent, and the ruined lord who is ready to vote that black is white that he may get a place at Court and pay his gambling debts. Where there is not saving there must be debt, and from the days of the Roman Republic to our own, in every age and country, a large debtor class has been an element of danger and disturbance. That is the public—the national side of the question. It may seem almost ridiculous to speak of penny savings in connection with the growth or decline of national wealth ; but yet look at the matter that way. I will not repeat the old story of what the British liquor bill is—just 140 millions, or 20*l.* a head for every family of five in the British Islands. Nor will I tell you that half that sum saved would pay all the taxes of the year ; but we all know that without supposing the nation to adopt very ascetic habits, or even to become as strictly frugal as France, there is an enormous margin for reasonable economy, and we do not, I think, always sufficiently appreciate the fact that private frugality will enforce public economy. Suppose only one quarter of the sum spent in

liquor or tobacco to be saved ; that implies a reduction of ten millions in the revenue ; and do you suppose that any Chancellor of the Exchequer would go to work to put on those ten millions again by direct taxation ? Not he ; he would learn to do without them.

It is a peculiarity of this country, and I think a happy peculiarity, that the class whose incomes are under 150*l.* a year—the class, that is, who live on weekly wages—may relieve themselves almost entirely from taxation if they think fit. They do not now as a rule care to do it, but the time will come when there will be a change in that as well as in other respects. The depositors in these banks remind me, if they will not be offended by the comparison, of those almost microscopic insects which have built up the great coral reefs of the Pacific. Singly, these insects are insignificant and almost invisible ; collectively, they have raised mountains out of the ocean, inclosed square leagues of sea, and constructed breakwaters which exceed a thousandfold the most gigantic works of human engineers. And so you, the human workers, are piling up, by your separate minute contributions, the gigantic structure of national wealth. As to the private and personal part of the business, I leave that to others to deal with. Preaching is not in my line, but I remember the Spanish proverb, ‘He that sleeps too soundly, let him borrow the pillow of a debtor,’ and as Spaniards have a good deal of experience on the subject of insolvency, I suppose we may accept their opinion. Just one word more. You will sometimes hear people talk—young people especially, as if there was something mean and poor about the habit of frugality, and as if squandering were the sign of a generous nature. If ever that fallacy is uttered in your hearing, just put your foot upon it and trample it out. There are, here and there, misers and selfish economists, no doubt ; but, as a rule, what is there less generous than self-indulgence ? Most people who save do so with at least a partly unselfish purpose. They save for the old age of a parent, for the future of a child, or in order that they themselves, in old age, may not be a

burden to others. But of what is needlessly spent, how much goes, in general, in nothing else than personal and selfish pleasure! It is very fine, I dare say, for a youth to have his fling, and come home with empty pockets ; but what is there fine about the spectacle of that same youth grown old, with nothing of his own laid by, disabled from work, and living on the charity of his brothers, his sisters, or his children ? Who has got the best of it then ? But, as I said before, I will not preach. I only congratulate you, the workers in this penny bank movement, on what you have done already—it is a good deal—and I wish you life, health, and energy to go on with your useful service.

XLIX

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION—SCHOOL BOARDS

LIVERPOOL : JANUARY 26, 1880

I COULD not refuse the invitation lately received from the Liverpool Educational Council to distribute the scholarships and prizes awarded by them for the work of last year, because, when one's co-operation is asked for a useful public purpose, and when no pressure of private or public business stands in the way, it is ungracious to decline such assistance, however little it may be worth. We have all got to justify our existence, or, in homelier words, to pay for our keep in some shape ; and though I am not sure that making speeches about education is the most useful kind of employment that a man can be put to just now, still, as far as I am concerned, it is the first that comes to hand, and therefore I have had great pleasure in coming here. I need not tell you the nature of the duty which the Liverpool Council of Education performs. . . . It has permanently founded eight scholarships, at a cost of 500*l.* each ; and I notice the fact because I hope to see the number of these scholarships largely extended. There are a good many people who are afflicted with what a Frenchman called *la manie de la perpétuité*, who wish to be able to say *non omnis moriar*, who desire to live in something they have done when they themselves have, in the ancient phrase, gone over to the majority. Now it is not given to many persons to play a part in history ; or to write a book which, as Gibbon said of his great historical work, will be 'read and abused a hundred years hence ;' or even to connect their names with some large national foundation, such as that of Mr. Peabody in London, and Sir William Brown in this city. But there is a kind of local immortality which anyone may secure who has 1,000*l.* and the will to

spend it. Let him found a scholarship, and he may have the assurance that his money will not be wasted, that it will not be jobbed, that it will be a help to deserving students in distant times, and that his disposition is as little likely to be interfered with as any arrangement which in these days it would be possible to make. His name will be handed down, and some people at least will think kindly of him perhaps two or three hundred years hence.

You may like to know what is the exact state of the case at present as regards these scholarships. Of the seven which I am about to announce presently, five are permanently endowed ; the remaining two are temporarily provided for. All these are held for three years. Next year there will be seven more to give away, and I am authorised, by those who are best able to judge, to say that they confidently hope and expect that, before the time comes for their distribution, these seven also will be endowed by similar gifts. But, returning to what is immediately before us, I wish to express my conviction of the good work which this local council of education is doing. There are many things in regard to elementary schools which in a great city like this ought to be done, and which a school board in its official capacity cannot do. Official machinery must always have something stiff and hard in its working, and you want it in these matters supplemented by individual care and by personal encouragement. Honours and rewards conferred on the teachers of the most successful schools, as well as on the children in those schools ; prizes and certificates of merit to pupil teachers ; and, speaking generally, the public recognition by the community of Liverpool of all useful services rendered to the cause of education in Liverpool—these are not things which can be done by official authority or paid for out of the rates, but they are things which nevertheless ought to be done. . . .

Compulsion is a rough and clumsy expedient. In some cases it is necessary, but it is apt to create hardships, unless cautiously employed, and to rouse against the School Board,

and even against education in general, a feeling of suspicion and distrust which it is most undesirable to create. In Liverpool the object has been to lead instead of to drive; to do away as far as possible with the necessity of exercising compulsory powers by attracting to the schools children whose parents are not much inclined to send them there. You may ask, How is that to be done? We answer that, by the prospect held out of rewards and prizes, and of public distinction, the parents are induced not only to send their children more freely than they otherwise would to the schools, but also to keep them there longer. That latter point, as you know, has always been a difficulty—I may say one of the greatest difficulties which teachers have had to contend against. We say, further, that by these annual competitions, conducted by independent examiners (I lay stress upon this, for we do not believe in auditing our own accounts), if a boy shows more than ordinary talent, he is brought forward, and has a chance given him which otherwise he would not have. And, lastly, the effect of this annual competition, not only between scholars, but between schools, keeps alive in both teachers and taught a sort of healthy emulation. If in any school the method of teaching is defective, the defect may very long escape notice, unless the school is compared with others. But under our system of yearly comparison, no such deficiency can long exist without being brought to light. I must also mention one other feature of the system, which is this—that when the attendance of a child has been punctual and regular for not less than a year, when in that year the absences have not exceeded five, a reward is granted which practically confers free education in the same school for the whole of the succeeding twelve months. That is a kind of prize which, I am told, is greatly valued; and it has this advantage, amongst others, that it can be gained by anyone, that success in gaining it does not depend on the accident of talent, nor on the casual inferiority of rivals. It is a moral rather than an intellectual test, and the habit which it tends to create is equally useful in any department of life.

The working of the educational scheme here leads me to one remark which I wish to make. It is no use denying the fact that a good deal of jealousy prevails, in some parts of the country, against the extension of School Boards. Every now and then you see in print a piteous appeal to the public in general to help some little parish school of which you never heard before, and to save it, not from being swept away altogether—that would be, apparently, a minor evil—but from being taken over by a School Board. Well, that is only nature. Power is power, even on a small scale; and when two or three men, with some cost and trouble, have set up a school, which they can manage in their own way, naturally they do not like handing over the control of it to a committee, of which, though they may be leading members, they are only members like others. But in this country we soon learn to reconcile ourselves to the inevitable. When a rural police was first set up in the counties it was necessary, for many years, to make its establishment optional; but, in time, the squires began to see that the plan was the right one, and the obligation to adopt it was accepted in the end without difficulty. It will be just the same with School Boards. It was, and is, quite right to hurry nobody, but to give people time to get used to a new notion; but that they must before long become universal is, I think, as certain as most things that are not matters of actual calculation. But what I would respectfully urge on our educational friends in the smaller towns, and in the country, is to look at what is being done in the great cities, and to satisfy themselves that cheap, good, and moral teaching can be given at least as effectually under a School Board as without one, while the burden falls much more fairly; for, though I am an admirer of voluntary agencies wherever they can be brought to bear, there is no doubt that when a public duty is discharged by voluntary agencies alone, it is apt to be thrown on a very few shoulders. The willing horse draws all the load. I have seen that repeatedly, and I think I see it in the case of many of our Liverpool charities. I remember looking over the yearly

record of work done in a very large London parish, where, out of many thousands, some fifty or sixty individuals supplied nearly the whole of the funds required. That is not fair, where, as is the case with schools, the State and the public recognise them not as a luxury, but as a necessity. We need not fear but that there will be plenty of room for volunteers in educational matters even if every school in the country were put under a School Board—the very arrangements which I have been describing to you as in force here show that to be the case.

There is one thing more about our Liverpool system which I ought to note, if only because it is not as common as it might be. Neither in the School Board, I believe, nor in the Council of Education, has there been the slightest hitch or unpleasantness caused by sectarian disputes. You know what controversies on ecclesiastical subjects are when once they begin—how reasonable people cease to reason—how amiable people say and do unpleasant things—and how, figuratively speaking, mud and bad eggs are always flying about. When people go in for disputes of that sort, it is election time with them every year and all the year round. We have kept clear of that trouble in Liverpool; all sects have been represented—all have been equally and fairly dealt with; and, on the neutral ground of moral and intellectual training, they have worked in friendship together. Why should it not be the same everywhere? I cannot tell, except that Liverpool is a busy place, and that, when men have got useful work to do, they have neither time nor taste for wrangling. That is nearly all with which I need trouble you to-day. I spare you the well-worn commonplaces about the advantages of mental culture and of literary tastes; but I will give you one result of personal experience, and I will suggest to you one observation which you may make for yourselves. I have been many years a magistrate; and as Chairman at Kirkdale I have had to deal in the last twenty-three years with the cases of more than 1,500 offenders against the law. That is a sufficient number to judge by; and nothing has struck me more forcibly than the utter stupidity and brainlessness of 99 out of every

100 of those unlucky individuals. It is not merely ignorance; that might be explained by their mostly belonging to the poorest class; but, as far as my observation goes, they are for the most part as much below the average of their own class intellectually as they can be morally. Nine-tenths of them might be Zulus for any good that they have got from civilisation; and that is my answer to the foolish talk you sometimes hear about the worthlessness of merely intellectual training. Civilised beings will at least not have the vices of savages or of brutes. My other remark is this: Look about you—use your own eyes and judgment, and of all those persons whom you know anything of who have gone to the bad, just observe how many have any turn for books or study. You will find one, perhaps, here and there; but only as a rare exception. Intellectual activity is in itself a moral safeguard—it kills vicious tastes, just as in the bodily life a healthy appetite for food keeps out the morbid craving for drink. Therefore it is that to the spread of School Boards, and of all that goes with them, I look for moral and social, as well as intellectual improvement. Indeed, I cannot separate them. Mental culture cannot come without assiduity, and that is a moral quality. In an examination it is not the sharpest who wins, it is the most accurate, the most laborious, and most careful. But it will not come of itself. There must be willing hands to work. There must be co-operation of classes and of sects, and though money must not be wasted, it must not be unduly spared. What on earth is the use of it if not to promote civilisation? Yet you hear people cry out about the monstrous burdens imposed by the School Board, who would vote for spending a hundred times as much in other ways which we will not talk of here. I do not think I ought to sit down without mentioning the debt which we owe to the examiners who here worked for us. They have given their services unpaid, and very laborious service it is, and they want and ask no return except the recognition which you will not refuse. I will trouble you no further, but proceed to the business of the day.

L

COFFEE TAVERNS

LONDON : FEBRUARY 25, 1880

Now, as to the general subject of coffee taverns, I do not suppose there is anything very new to be said about them, although, as regards the general welfare of the population, the subject is of far more importance than many about which a far greater amount of noise is made. But a witness who comes forward in a Court of Justice to speak of what he knows is not found fault with if he is not original and entertaining. It is enough that he should be accurate, and I come here as a witness to tell you the little I know of the great and growing success of this movement in those large northern towns with which I happen to be best acquainted. Liverpool, with its immense seafaring population, and with that other kind of population which, unluckily, is attracted there, as to all places where sailors come ashore in large numbers—Liverpool has an unfortunate reputation in the matter of sobriety. But in Liverpool a Coffee-house Company has been set up within the last two or three years which a few months ago was so prosperous that when by way, as I thought, of giving it a lift, I wrote and applied for some shares, I found that instead of conferring a favour by my application, their allotment would have been a favour conferred upon me—that, in fact, they were all taken up, and stood at a high premium. In Manchester and other places I hear of similar success, and I think this may be taken for granted, that there is a real public want to be supplied, and that therefore these concerns ought not to fail except, as every other undertaking may fail, in consequence of mis-

management. It is a common thing to hear people say, when they are arguing against the well-known ideas of Sir Wilfrid Lawson and his friends, ‘Oh, I am all for temperance, but I am against temperance on compulsion.’ I rather lean to that view myself, but there is another side to the question which, perhaps, we do not sufficiently consider. We see in our great towns that often we are apt to have not temperance, but intemperance, on compulsion. There are thousands of shops where intoxicants are sold, but till lately there were few or none where a thirsty man could get a cheap cup of anything that would not make him drunk.

As you know, there is a great deal of talk in connection with this subject about what is called local option. We are not only for local option, but we are for personal option, in this sense—that we want everybody to have what he has not now—a free choice as to whether he shall have stimulants or non-stimulants as part of his daily consumption. As matters are, the working man’s choice now very often is—drink beer or go dry, and knowing, as we all do, the extent to which excess in drink prevails, we think that the least which society can undertake (I do not say that it is the most which it should undertake) is to give a man a chance of being temperate without making himself exceptionally uncomfortable. I fully believe that for every one man who has taken to swilling of his own free and deliberate choice, two or three, or possibly a much larger proportion, have been driven into it by example, by the influence of social habits, or by the fact that a good fire, a warm room, company, and refreshment were not to be had without the accompaniment of liquor. Now that is what we want to get rid of. It would seem as if a movement like this—interfering with nobody’s freedom, meddling with no man who wishes to be left alone—ought to meet with little if any opposition. But do not let us flatter ourselves into any such sanguine delusion. As yet it is not big enough to have made enemies; but if it succeeds as the co-operative stores have succeeded (and I do not see why it should not), it will be met with an opposition as vehement, as bitter, and in

the end as futile, as that which the co-operators have had to encounter. And all the better that it should be so. We do not expect to win without a fight. I recollect once hearing two Members of Parliament talking over a speech which had been lately delivered in the House of Commons. ‘That was a telling speech of So-and-So’s,’ one said. ‘Well, I do not know,’ the other answered, ‘I did not see that it made anybody very angry.’ And so, depend upon it, a reform which makes nobody angry, which provokes no jealousy, and excites no criticism, is not generally one of a very effective character.

Now, I am not here to make a temperance speech, but I think there are two very good texts which temperance orators might dilate upon. We hear a great deal about the peasantry becoming owners of land, having gardens and fields of their own, and so forth. Do you know what an acre of good agricultural land is worth on an average? Put it at 60*l.*, and you will not be far wrong; in fact, that is a high price just now; and if you choose to do a little ciphering, you will see that that makes as nearly as possible 3*d.* for every square yard. I wonder how many working men think that whenever they order threepennyworth of beer they are swallowing down a yard of good land. Or, put it another way—suppose out of our drink bill of 140 millions we could save only 60 millions—and that would not imply the adoption of severely abstemious habits—and suppose that very moderate reduction continued only for ten years, how much land could the working classes afford to buy out of that saving? It is a very simple sum—10 millions of acres, or just about one-eighth of the whole soil of these islands. I recommend that as a subject for profitable meditation. Now, as to my other text, I do not think our great consuming class sufficiently understand how completely the publican and the tax-gatherer are identified. I do not think they quite realise that whenever they order sixpennyworth of spirits they are handing over threepence as a free gift to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. If they realised that, perhaps they would repent of their liberality.

We hear some talk of a probable deficit of 2,000,000*l.* in the Excise revenue for the year just ending. I hope I shall not be called unpatriotic for saying that I could be well content to see a much larger deficit in that branch of the revenue. A more sober people could pay as well for the necessity of enforcing a somewhat stricter public economy, and if the altered habits of the nation led to a new departure in finance —well, there would be some sufferers and a good many grumbler, but, on the whole, I do not believe even those who had to pay most heavily in the first instance would have reason to complain in the long run. If I had to talk to working men on financial matters I should tell them, ‘Do not complain of being taxed; you are hardly taxed at all. It is you who tax yourselves, and if you make yourselves sheep you must expect to be shorn.’ You may think I have wandered from the subject, but all that I have been saying is really a part of the argument in favour of these coffee taverns. You are fighting the great enemy, drink—and fighting him with the most effective weapons. May your hands be strong for the work—for you have got your work before you.

LI

LORD LAWRENCE

MANSION HOUSE, LONDON : FEBRUARY 18, 1880

I HAVE come here to discharge a duty, in many respects agreeable, and assuredly honourable, but yet one which is not without its difficulties. I am to ask you to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of an eminent public servant—of one who was more than an eminent public servant, for with a great intellect he combined a singularly fine and unselfish character. The language of panegyric is not easy to use: partly because, from that tendency which we all regret, but which we all share, praise, even of the dead, is apt to be less interesting than criticism; partly because the greatness of a human character is ill described in the current phrases of popular speech; partly also because, while in most cases the language of unmeasured eulogy sounds unreal and rhetorical, any reserve or qualification falls tamely and coldly on the ears of those who have come to reverence and to admire. But these difficulties trouble me but little to-day, for it is of Lord Lawrence that I have to speak. Malice itself never fastened on his career the imputation of one discreditable incident or unworthy act. His task is done. His name can now excite no envy, except, so far, it may be, as his dead greatness overshadows the living, and a friend need not fear to speak in terms of too warm sympathy about a life which offers to an enemy absolutely no one topic of detraction. I cannot claim to have known Lord Lawrence as intimately as many who, happily, are still living, and perhaps present, but I was his guest at Lahore twenty-eight years ago, when, with his brother, he governed the Punjab; I was his colleague in the India Office six years later; and it was often my privilege in more recent times to discuss with him, or rather to gather

his opinions upon, questions that arose concerning Indian affairs. Therefore, without claiming any special intimacy, I may say, as the world goes, that I knew him well; and the impression which his character and conversation always left on my mind was one which I can only describe as a certain heroic simplicity. If his opportunity had never come, if he had never had a chance to do an historical act, you would still have felt that you were in the presence of a man capable of accomplishing great things if they were wanted, and capable also, as it seemed to me, of leaving the credit of them to anybody who chose to take it. I do not believe that any man was ever so successful in reaching the highest prizes of life who struggled less for them. He said to me once that if as a young man he had had enough to live upon, however poorly, at home, he never should have gone out to India. He took his place where he could find it; he did his duty as it came to him to do, and he could, I think, have felt that the doing of it was reward enough, even if fame and honours had not followed. I need not remind you of the leading facts of his career, for that would be merely to repeat one of the most famous chapters of Anglo-Indian history. When the insurrection broke out in 1857 he was in charge of the Punjab, a newly conquered province, inhabited by perhaps the most warlike race in India, full of old soldiers who within ten years of that date had fought for independence, and therefore, as might be supposed, were likely to go against us. An ordinary ruler might have been excused if, in these circumstances, he had kept back every available soldier for defensive purposes. But Sir John Lawrence knew better. He was confident, on the one hand, that a wise and just administration had reconciled the Sikhs to English rule; he knew, on the other hand, that the crisis was at Delhi, not at Lahore, and there can be no doubt now that he was right. Even with the help sent from the Punjab the forces round Delhi were barely strong enough to succeed. Without that help the siege would have been hopeless, and I have never met any Indian who doubted that if the resistance at Delhi had been

prolonged, if the siege had in consequence been raised, if the cause of the insurgents had even for a few weeks appeared to be the winning cause, many of the native chiefs who were wavering and watching events would have taken part against us, and the struggle would have assumed a far more formidable character. It is therefore hardly an exaggeration to say that the action of Sir John Lawrence saved India. At the lowest, it averted, in all probability, the continuance of the war for two or three years, with the result of bankruptcy to the Indian Exchequer and incalculable suffering to the Indian people. And in saying this I do not lessen nor disparage the merits of Lord Canning. Communications were interrupted; and Sir John Lawrence, like every other Governor of a distant province, had to act on his own responsibility.

Of the administration of Lord Lawrence as Governor-General I will not speak in detail, because it is equally my duty and my wish to avoid touching on any controverted question of policy. His policy was one of rigid economy, because he knew—few men knew it so well—the abject poverty, the constant struggle against destitution, which characterise the life of the Indian peasant, and it seemed to him cruelty and crime to throw on a class so heavily weighted the added burden of unnecessary taxation. It was a policy of peace, because war, which means promotion to the Anglo-Indian officer and fresh appointments to the English civil servant, means increased suffering to the native cultivator. And it was the same dominant feeling, the same intense appreciation of the sufferings of the poor, joined to the orderly instincts of a financier, which led him to show a somewhat modified and imperfect sympathy, in general, with Indian princes and chiefs. He was often thought to lean to the side of severity where their interests were concerned. I am not disposed to argue how far he was wrong and how far right in that respect. I am only explaining a tendency which was known to all who knew him. He thought that as a rule they were enjoying wealth without fully recognising its responsibilities, that they were often drones in a hive not too well stocked with honey, and when a question of right arose

between them and the ill-paid, ill-fed, working class, his sympathies were very decidedly with the latter, though a sense of justice might be stronger than even his sympathy. With that feeling was connected also his view of our position in the East. He not merely saw, not merely acknowledged in words, but recognised in action that our only possible justification before the world and our own consciences for being where we are lay in the wretchedness of the masses under rulers who were continually at war with one another, and in our power to make their condition at least more endurable by maintaining that external peace and order which may in the long run enable them to work out their own form of civilisation in their own way. That solid and substantial benefit to humanity was, in his mind, worth struggling for ; apart from that, I think he valued mere glory-hunting as little for his country as he did for himself.

During five years he administered India—working hard, as all Governor-Generals must work—living plainly and simply—as it is better, in my mind, a Governor-General should live—not, perhaps, wholly approved of by the showy and fashionable part of society which is to be found in Calcutta, as well as in London, but respected by members of the services as a man who knew their work as well as they knew it themselves, and venerated by the natives, whom he understood as no Governor-General has understood them before or since. His time for retirement came, and he withdrew, then verging on old age—for men live fast in the Tropics—and with weakened health. Nearly forty years of service had been crowned by the highest personal promotion and the highest hereditary honour—a Viceroyalty and a Peerage. He had earned the right to rest, if ever man earned it ; or, if absolute rest was not compatible with his still active habits, he might have selected some kind of work which would have kept him before the eyes of the public without involving laborious drudgery in matters of detail. But that was not his view. He was offered the chair of the London School Board—a heavy, a thankless, and, compared with those which he had filled, an obscure position. He saw his way to be of use, and he took the post, and for years he

worked in it as if his living had depended on his exertions. For an ex-Viceroy he might seem to have descended in point of official dignity; but something would have been lacking to the completeness of Lord Lawrence's life if that last proof had not been given of his absolute indifference to the mere look and show of things so long as any publicly useful result was to be obtained. Many of you may recollect that his brother, Sir Henry Lawrence, when dying, desired that his epitaph might be, 'Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty.' On the tomb of the younger and more fortunate of the two brothers, the inscription might well have run, 'Here lies John Lawrence, who did his duty to the last.'

I have little more to add, but it may be noticed that though of mortal men none ever less went out of his way to court or to conciliate the favour of those with whom he worked—for he was blunt and plain of speech even to a fault—no man whom I have known made warmer friends or more enthusiastic and devoted adherents. They worked with an almost passionate energy for a man who, if he never spared them (and certainly that was the case), never spared himself either, and under whose often rugged manner they well knew lay a warm and affectionate heart. Gentlemen, I have done; you have other speakers to hear, and they will fill up the outline which I have but feebly sketched. Two wishes only I may express—one that the monument which we raise may be such as will show that even in this bustling age we do not quite forget noble service rendered to England because it was rendered a few years ago; the other that some one competent for the work may give us a worthy record of the life of Lord Lawrence, in order that so illustrious an example may not be lost, and that those who come after us may know something of the man in whom so many of his contemporaries saw one of the best and finest types of the patriot and of the statesman. I conclude by moving: 'That John, Lord Lawrence, was a statesman of whom England is proud, and that he deserves an honourable memorial at the hands of his countrymen.'

LII

FREE LIBRARIES

BLACKPOOL: JUNE 18, 1880

THE Town Clerk, in the address he has read, has referred to such part as I have played in public life, and, though addressing an audience of mixed opinions, I am sure I may say this, that, arduous and often disagreeable as the duties of English public life are, they would be infinitely more so were it not for the conviction which every public man entertains that the nation will put a kindly and generous construction upon the proceedings of those who are endeavouring honestly and conscientiously, according to their lights, to serve it. Ladies and gentlemen, I have come the more willingly, because, as your Mayor just now observed, the good effect of such an undertaking as that of which you are now celebrating the completion is not confined to the immediate locality benefiting by it. It is not merely an honour and advantage to your town, it is also an example to others. That would be the case wherever a free library was established; but it is peculiarly the case here, because probably there is hardly any town in England which, in addition to its normal population, receives so large a number of visitors. Many years have now elapsed since the Act came into operation by which the establishment of free rate-supported libraries was made possible; and the Act, I think we may now say from an experience of twenty years, has worked well so far as it has worked at all. I have never heard of any single town in which, having been once put in force, it has subsequently been allowed to drop; but its operations hitherto have been partial more than universal. These northern districts, and the great manufacturing centres

generally, have been, as might be expected, the first to set the example ; and nowhere in the world—not even in the United States—is better or more ample provision made for the wants of readers than in Liverpool, Manchester, and, I believe, Birmingham. But in London, partly because the enormous size of the capital, and the fact that it is the capital, tend in some degree to weaken local municipal feelings, there has undoubtedly been no general movement in favour of applying the Act, and attempts to do so in particular districts have more often than not been unsuccessful. So again in some of the half-rural towns we can perhaps hardly expect that there should be much forwardness to incur expense not absolutely necessary, in order to provide for wants which are felt only by a limited class. You might think that when there was least doing—when there was most leisure, there would be most inclination for reading ; but I do not think the experience of the world confirms that view of the question. The amount of leisure, and the use made of it, are only too commonly in an inverse ratio one to another. The idlest man is generally he who has least time, and it is those who are busy who are the most ready to meet unexpected calls upon them. What applies to individuals applies to communities also ; yet the want which these free libraries supply is very real, and in some cases very pressing.

We are probably, with perhaps the single exception of the Americans, the hardest worked people in the world. In all that concerns work we are about the most successful. I am not sure that we succeed equally well in matters of amusement and recreation, except when, as it often happens, our amusement takes the form of hard bodily work. At any rate there are some sources of enjoyment from which we are cut off. We cannot, at least in the northern parts, enjoy outdoor life all the year round as it is enjoyed by the inhabitants of Southern Europe. We have not yet, speaking generally, accomplished the feat, whatever we may do in a generation or two, of making our towns such as to give lively gratification to the artistic sense. I may say so without offence, for un-

doubtedly you are exceptions to that which I say is the general rule, although I believe artistic tastes and requirements are becoming more developed every year. We are not, taking the generality of us, and comparing us with the Continental countries, a play-going people; and until within the last few years, to my mind, we were not a musical people. And there are those who say that we—or at least a good many of us—never look so little as if we were enjoying life as when we are trying to amuse ourselves. On the other hand, there is no doubt that we are essentially a reading people. Take books and newspapers together, I imagine we do not fall short either of the Germans or the Americans in that respect. The French, with all their singular quickness, are not generally readers; they prefer, as a rule, the exchange of ideas, and therefore I do not include them in the comparison. With us the taste for reading is a growing taste, for every year and every decade sees an increase in the quantity of literature provided for the public, whatever the quality may be, which is a question I do not refer to. There is, therefore, no country in the world where rate-supported libraries should be so common as in England. They supply opportunities for culture to real students, and though that class is never in any country a very numerous one, and probably never will be, yet I am sure it is a class which deserves every help and encouragement that we can give to it. They furnish rational pleasure and amusement to hundreds of thousands who have not too much pleasure in their lives, and to whom a good deal of such amusement and recreation as is commonly offered is not of the most desirable kind. They aid the spread of civilisation, and if it be true, as I believe it is, that with all our wisdom, with all our equality before the law, with all the interest in social questions which many people sincerely feel, and which everybody in these days is bound to profess—if it be true that, notwithstanding all these things, there is no country in the world where the presence or the absence of culture is more marked than in England, then I say that this is an object which we cannot afford to neglect.

Free libraries are of use, too, in another way. They show what can be done by co-operation. When I speak of co-operation, I do not refer to that particular form of movement which is just now scaring tradesmen out of their wits. I do not speak of that, but I mean joint contributions for, joint participation in, one common purpose by which the community acts as a single whole, and not merely as a collection of individuals, each looking to an object of his own. It would not be a bad test, roughly speaking, of the degree of civilisation which any country has attained if we were to judge it by the measure in which the habit of acting together for joint purposes, of throwing funds or labour into a joint stock for some common object, prevails among the people. I suspect that, as we go on, at least in towns, private libraries on anything like a large scale will tend to become less and less common, and that we shall see a larger and larger number of collections, not necessarily free to all comers, or supported out of the rates, but practically available to all at moderate prices, and filling the part which that useful institution the London Library fills in London and its neighbourhood. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I will not detain you further, partly because on a subject of this kind it is utterly impossible to say anything which has not been said ten thousand times before; partly because, after a considerable experience of speeches, I have never, or hardly ever, heard of a speech that was complained of for being too short, whereas I have heard a great many complained of for being too long.

LIII

THE PUNISHMENT OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS

MANCHESTER : OCTOBER 5, 1880

THERE is, I suppose, no question as to the importance of the subject which this meeting has been called to discuss. It is one which affects the fate of some thousands every year of our future men and women. It is a subject with which every magistrate who has had much judicial experience has often found himself compelled to deal, one with which he has probably often had to deal in a manner not altogether satisfactory to his own convictions or to his own feelings. I believe also that most of those who have had to do with the administration of justice will concur with me in thinking that it involves questions of greater complexity and difficulty than is, perhaps, at first sight apparent. You have in all punishment two separate and distinct objects to aim at—one is to deter, and the other is to reform, and no system of punishment will be altogether satisfactory which does not more or less combine both these results. I am not sure that even in the case of adults we have reached entirely satisfactory conclusions in regard to these matters. Practically, except in very few and rare cases, imprisonment is our sole penalty, and I have often been painfully impressed with the fact that after two or three terms of imprisonment the same offenders come again and again, apparently neither deterred nor reformed by the discipline which they have undergone, but accepting their penalty as the inevitable condition of the life they have chosen to lead. However, that is not the matter immediately before us. What we have to consider is

how we are to deal with a particular class of offenders—offenders who are old enough to be mischievous and sometimes to be dangerous, who are old enough to know that they are doing wrong and to incur a certain amount of moral responsibility, but who, nevertheless, are not of an age to realise the full gravity of the situation in which they have placed themselves, to know the full extent of the injury which they have inflicted upon others, and the manner in which their act will affect their own future career. Now, whatever we ought to do for offenders of that class, there is one thing which in my mind it is perfectly clear that we ought not to do, and that is to send them to gaol. I say that not on the ground which I have sometimes seen put forward—that of the bad associations to which they might be exposed in gaol, because in a well-conducted prison there ought to be power to prevent any association of that kind; but I say it because imprisonment is a life-long stigma. It is a mark of disgrace which cannot be wiped out, and which is too heavy a penalty for childish or boyish acts. People only ask whether it is really true that So-and-so was ever in gaol or not, and if they hear that he was, they do not always stop to inquire at what age the offence was committed, and how far he ought to have been treated as a really responsible person. I entirely agree with what Sir William Harcourt has said and written upon that subject,¹ and, as a Chairman of Sessions, I have always acted, as far as the law allowed, upon the lines which he has laid down. The reformatory, or some analogous institution, ought to be the substitute for the gaol in all cases to which it can properly be applied. I do not know why it is that imprisonment is prescribed by law before the provisions for sending a boy to a reformatory take effect.² I have never heard any good reason for this, and I think that the sooner we are free from that obligation the better.

¹ Letter of Sir W. V. Harcourt, Home Secretary, to the Mayor of Manchester, September 16, 1880 (*Times*, September 18, 1880).

² The law now allows a youthful offender to be sent to a reformatory without imprisonment, 56 & 57 Vict., c. 48 (1893).

The question remains how far the present reformatory system admits of modification in that sense and for the purpose with which we are now dealing. Managers at present object as a rule—at least, that has been the result of my observations and experience—to receive boys for a term at the lowest of three years, and sometimes they object to receive them for less than five years. Obviously there are a great many cases in which some penal detention, as we may call it, even for three years, is quite in excess of the offence committed, or where it is an unfair burden upon the parents and an unnecessary charge upon the community. What we want to find is some punishment for boys from ten to fourteen and fifteen years of age which shall not inflict permanent disgrace, which shall not confound them in after life with the criminal class, which shall not impose a heavy burden on parents in cases where the parents themselves may be free from blame, which shall not create a misplaced sympathy by any appearance of over-severity, and which shall, on the other hand, be efficient enough to act as a deterrent. These conditions are hard to reconcile, perhaps impossible to reconcile, in the fullest sense; but unless we can to some extent satisfy them we shall not have accomplished what we are endeavouring to do.

Now, some people, as you all know, recommend flogging as a kind of universal remedy in such cases. I do not hold with that. I believe there are many cases where it is useful and unobjectionable, and I should not object to extend the power of magistrates so as to make it possible for them to apply that kind of punishment in some cases to which it is not at present applicable. As far as I know, the limits upon its application are rather arbitrary and formal, and are not based on any real principle. But we must bear in mind that if the question is to be the question of applying corporal punishment as a general rule in such cases, there are objections to that kind of punishment which it is impossible to ignore, and which would be sure to operate very strongly against it. In the first place, I imagine it is about the most

unequal kind of punishment that can be devised. There is no one respect in which individuals differ more one from another than in their susceptibility to bodily pain. In the next place, we live in times when public opinion is somewhat impulsive, and when the fact that a strong current of feeling is running in a particular direction to-day is no guarantee that it will not run in a contrary direction a few months hence. A single case of over-severity, such as might very well occur when power was given to a very large number of magistrates throughout the country—a single case of severity in the application of corporal punishment would very likely cause a reaction against its use which would prevent that kind of punishment from being applied even in cases where it might be perfectly legitimate and fitting. Then, again, if it is very slightly and leniently administered, it does not serve the purpose of deterring, and I think you may take it as a rule that punishments of this kind, where they fail to deter, have the contrary effect of tending to harden. Therefore, while I would give power to employ corporal punishment to a moderate extent in some cases where the power does not now exist, I should be sorry to look upon it as a general means of correction in such cases as those with which we have to deal.

I believe that what we want can be best obtained by a modification in, or addition to, our present system of reformatory treatment. Two or three months' detention in a school where the work is hard, where there is little or no play, and where the life generally is rough and unattractive, ought, in the case of a boy, to answer all the purposes which are met in the case of men by a short term of imprisonment. No lad who had gone through the discipline, if it were properly applied, would wish to be exposed to it again, while being boys, and young boys only, it would not leave a stain upon their character in after life, nor destroy the feeling of self-respect in the manner which arises from imprisonment in a gaol. I quite admit that what is proposed in the resolution which I shall move is not an ideally perfect scheme. There is one risk attending it—that where a number of not very well-

conducted lads are brought together in any institution—call it by what name you please—there is the danger that the worst will have a corrupting influence upon the others; but that is an objection which may equally be applied to reformatory schools as at present administered, and we know that the reformatory system has, nevertheless, been fairly successful. I would add that I think magistrates dealing with very young offenders, boys of nine or ten, or even eleven—you cannot go precisely by age, because character does not always depend upon years—might, more than they do at present, take upon themselves the responsibility of remitting all legal punishment on condition of the parents undertaking to see that the boy is effectually punished at home. That is always the best solution, where it is possible; for there is something incongruous, as everybody must feel who has had to do it, in bringing the machinery of the law to bear upon children who have no idea of legal responsibility, and very little idea of any authority except that of their parents. I should not be sorry to see an inquiry, whether by a Commission or a Parliamentary Committee, into the whole subject of juvenile offences. The laws of Continental punishment differ very much from ours. We know that on the Continent questions of this kind have been very closely studied. I think we might probably obtain experience from foreign States which would be useful to us here; but that is a question for Government to determine, and it is beyond the scope of our present meeting.

If I may sum up what I believe to be immediately desirable, I would put it under three heads. First, no imprisonment in any case for boys under fourteen; secondly, an extended power of moderate corporal punishment up to that age; and, thirdly, the provision of distinct and separate places of detention for young offenders, so that they should not escape punishment altogether merely because it is undesirable to send them to gaol. There is only one other remark which I should like to make. It is common to see magistrates attacked and found fault with at public meetings and in the press for having imprisoned young lads; but very

often the fault is rather with the law than with those who have to administer it. If a boy has put a stone under a railway train, thereby risking hundreds of lives, or if he has out of malice and revenge set a haystack on fire, or if he has brutally and violently assaulted and injured some younger child, you can hardly let him go free of all punishment, and if he is to be punished at all, it can only be in the manner which the law sanctions. I think this meeting will be of use in showing that the recent action of the Home Secretary meets with our approval, and that in this, as well as in other counties, magistrates will be ready to support him, and to act with him in doing away with unwise and demoralising forms of punishment. I will just mention, in concluding, that what I have said about corporal punishment is the expression of my own personal opinion only. It is possible some of you may not agree with me on the point, and, therefore, I wish to point out to you that what I have said is in no way embodied in the resolution which is before us, and if any of you differ from me on that branch of the subject, that need not prevent you from supporting the resolution I have to move: 'That, in the opinion of this meeting, legislation is urgently required to prevent juvenile offenders (the age to be left to be determined by the legislators) being sent to common gaols either for terms of punishment or preliminary to their committal to reformatory or industrial schools; and this meeting is also of opinion that suitable provision ought to be made for the detention of such juvenile offenders separate from adults between the time of arrest and that of the hearing of the charges against them.'

LIV

ON ART

OLDHAM: OPENING OF SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND ART, MARCH 17, 1881

. . . . As to the other branch—that which relates to art—I shall speak briefly, and with the caution which every man ought to observe when he feels himself out of his depth. If I knew absolutely nothing about such matters, I might, perhaps, address you as many speakers have addressed many audiences, with all the intrepidity of ignorance; but I do know just enough to be aware that I should be to you an incompetent teacher—and an incompetent teacher is worse than none. There are two sides to the question of art as we look at it here—the industrial or commercial, and that which relates to art as a part of human culture. Of the industrial branch of the question it is enough to say that English products go to every part of the world, that they compete with similar products from many other countries, that successful competition in all articles of common use depends, in some degree at least, on ornamentation, and that, defective as popular taste may be, yet, when a good and a bad design are put side by side, the great majority of civilised mankind have sufficient use of their eyes to detect the difference. A trained eye and a cultivated taste are, therefore, of no small value, even from the purely utilitarian point of view as bearing on the extension of our trade. But that is not the first or only consideration to which we have to look. We cannot, I think, lay down with precision the relation which exists between the artistic culture of a country and its general civilisation. That the one is an exact measure of the other is a doctrine

which, as it seems to me, history does not bear out. There are qualities which seem to have no relation to art, which yet are important factors in national greatness. I dare not contend that an inartistic people is an uncivilised people. The history of Rome, in old days, the history of England up to a recent date, would hardly agree with that theory. But I do affirm that a people in whom no high or great development of art is possible fails to realise a part of its destiny—fails to do for itself and the world what it might. And what is true of the nation is also true of the individual. I do not argue that without the love or knowledge of art even a high degree of mental or moral culture is impossible. Able men—men of keen intellect, men of honest and patriotic purpose—fulfilling their duties blamelessly, have lived, and do live, contentedly in a world which has nothing to please the eye or to excite the artistic taste. All one can say of such persons is that their development in one respect is incomplete : that they miss one of the purest and most lasting of human enjoyments, and that their loss is not the less because they themselves are not conscious of it. We do not believe in making everybody an artist, or even an amateur, but we do believe in raising the general level of culture in that respect ; and no man whose eyes are open can doubt the direction in which we are moving.

I do not suppose that in any development of human effort, with the single exception of mechanical science, England has made more marked advance within the last half-century than in the cultivation of art in its various forms. It is not usually our fault in England to depreciate our own doings, or to form too modest an estimate of ourselves, but in this one particular I really think that we are habitually more modest than we have occasion to be. As to an increase of the love for art, nobody who knows the world around him can dispute it. Look at the interest excited by the yearly London exhibitions —observe the enormous business, and I should say, from some observation of years past, the constantly increasing business, done in pictures, in drawings, and in prints. No rich man in the present day considers himself decently lodged unless he

has on his walls some specimens of the work of well-known artists. You may say there is more fashion in all this than real liking ; that may be in certain cases, but the people who follow fashion at least bear witness to the tendency of opinion and feeling in others, even if they only mimic it themselves. They are the straws that show how the wind blows ; and, for myself, I am not at all disposed to join in the ridicule sometimes thrown on amateurs and collectors who prefer to trust a better judgment than their own. They are, as likely as not, men who really wish to be serviceable in their pleasures, as well as in their business, who appreciate and respect what they do not fully understand, and who, to put it at the lowest, realise the fact that wealth has duties to art, and discharge them as best they can. And when we speak of the development of English art, am I not justified in saying that in one department at least—that of water colours—we have taken a lead in Europe ? I know that it is the general opinion, not in England only, for that would not prove much, but in foreign countries. And if in other branches we do not claim quite so high a position, we at least hold our own respectably and fairly. I have spoken so far of painting only. I am told, in addressing a Lancashire audience, I should speak of the improvements in the patterns of prints. Perhaps I ought, but I do not know much about it, except that I believe that in the last thirty years there has been an extraordinary progress in that respect. Now, take a kindred profession—that of architecture. Compare the London of to-day with the London of forty years ago. Far be it from me to say that the results are all that we could wish. There is ugliness enough still, and sometimes a pretentious ugliness which is worse than the simple absence of anything to please the eye. But everywhere there is the attempt to realise some results better than our forefathers accomplished, and the bare square boxes of brown brick, with holes cut in them, which represented the frontage of London streets at the beginning of our century are, happily, not reproduced in any modern work that I have seen. And outside London—here in these northern towns, where it must be owned that the

climate and surroundings are not inspiring—you at least show that public money is freely spent, with the full consent of those who have to bear the burden, on public edifices which only want a brighter sun and a purer air to be recognised as not unworthy of more picturesque regions. We do not boast of æsthetic cotton mills. I have seen one or two attempts in that direction, but on the whole the less said about them the better. But I think the Law Courts, the Town Halls, the Public Libraries, and similar buildings in our poor smoky Lancashire will bear architectural comparison with most modern European work. There is a fancy, I know (to my mind it is a very idle one), that something in our sombre climate, as southerners reckon it, unfits us for the successful pursuit of art—that brighter colouring and a wilder nature are requisite. Well, I am no authority on such a subject, but I may point out that though Holland is not the most sunny nor most romantic of countries, she has produced a school of art which is in its own line unrivalled and famous throughout Europe. On the other hand, I am not aware that those countries where Nature has done most for the pleasure of the eye and the cultivation of artistic taste—take Norway and Switzerland for example—have, as a fact, been specially famous for art.

A great writer has told us that so long as we live in smoky towns, and use steam engines, and build tall chimneys, it is no use trying to be artistic. That seems to me a hard doctrine, because, though we may modify, we cannot absolutely alter, the conditions of our national existence. If English art is only to flourish when English manufactures cease, it will have to wait a long time. Nor would a people utterly impoverished be likely to care about things not necessary for subsistence. But if warnings of that kind are meant not to discourage, but, on the contrary, to stimulate us into trying to make our surroundings a little brighter, we may pardon the exaggeration for the sake of the good advice. For myself, I hold that it is especially in districts like these where, unhappily, though it may be unavoidably, Nature has lost her charms,

and where crowded populations gather around centres of business that have in them not much that is beautiful and pleasant—I say it is here, more than elsewhere, that industry should most strenuously exert itself to repair the mischief that industry has produced—that if we cannot take our people to brighter and pleasanter regions, we should at least give them the chance of seeing something that is not sordid and squalid—and that if dullness of climate and monotony of employment create in some minds a taste for low and mean gratifications, we should counterwork these temptations by introducing such elements of a higher civilisation as can flourish under gloomy skies, and as will refine and soften—I do not say rough, but careless and undeveloped natures. Gentlemen, I have imperfectly discharged my duty. I do not speak to you as an artist, but as an unlearned, though sincere, lover of art. Happily, in all lines of life it is possible to appreciate what you only partially understand, and to sympathise with labours which you cannot imitate. I have no fear for the future of these schools. The English public, and especially the Lancashire public, does not let a good thing drop which it has once taken up.

LV

CO-OPERATION—CAPITAL AND LABOUR

ANNUAL CONGRESS OF CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES, LEEDS: JUNE 6, 1881

I THANK you, gentlemen, from my heart, for a reception the cordiality of which in a long experience of public life I have seldom seen equalled, and never surpassed. It is not in the language of idle flattery, but as the expression of a deliberate and sincere conviction, that I begin by telling you that the subject which brings this Congress together—the subject of co-operation—is, in my judgment, more important as regards the future of England than nine-tenths of those which are discussed in Parliament, and around which political controversies gather. In a free country the sphere of government is necessarily and properly limited; law restrains but few of our actions, and for the most part its operation is hardly felt by orderly and respectable people. The principles of action which a man shall adopt, the occupation he shall follow, the object towards which he shall direct his life, are matters with which the State, speaking broadly, cannot meddle. We have learnt by a long experience of national life that many matters which of old it was thought essential that the governing power should regulate, may with safety and advantage be left to the community; and as we have gradually adopted and are more and more adopting that doctrine, notwithstanding some superficial appearances to the contrary, the risk of political convulsion is proportionately lessened. But the energy which would cause these convulsions is diverted, not destroyed. It runs into other channels. The workman who thinks he is hardly used in the matter of wages does not ask

that they should be raised by legislation. He forms a union, and fights the employer on comparatively equal terms. The employer, in his turn, uses the same weapons. He combines with his colleagues in the same business to resist what he considers unjust demands. Voluntary associations on a large scale, asking no help from the State, but only freedom and not interference, are a marked and peculiar characteristic of the age; and it is to my mind not the least of the many merits of the co-operative movement that it is kept strictly within the limits of that principle. It does not clamour for public money; it does not ask that its opponents should be put down by law; it does not override free contract or meddle with individual liberties. Even those who oppose it most strongly, and whose personal interests suffer by its extension, do not venture to contend that the supporters of the new principle are not clearly within their right.

I confess that, personally, I have a great distrust of the philanthropist who says—and a good many are saying it in various forms: ‘If you agree with me that so-and-so is right, do help me to force everybody to do it.’ We are not free, depend upon it, from danger on that side; and Mr. Mill’s book on Liberty—one of the wisest books, as I think, of our times—is quite as much needed now as when it was written, perhaps rather more. Well, then, starting from this point, that co-operation is an essentially voluntary movement, let us see what we expect it to do for us, and what reasons we can give for our belief. In the first place, I assume as a thing needing no proof that co-operative industry sets its face against all shams, all dishonest work, all attempts at making an article to look like something which it is not, all the tricks and dodges by which the ingenious seller is in the habit of tempting the ignorant buyer. And in putting forward that argument on its behalf, I am not advancing any claim on the part of the co-operators to special virtue. I should have no great faith in the permanence and extension of a movement which required on the part of its promoters a standard of morality and character considerably higher than that which

generally prevails. To frame a society perfectly unselfish, in which a man should consider his neighbour's interests as he does his own, is a pleasant dream. Under the stimulus of religious enthusiasm it seems to be sometimes realised on a small scale, and for a limited time ; but, so far as the world has gone yet, experience has not been favourable to such attempts.

Then you ask, Why do I say that co-operative work is pretty sure to be honest work ? For this reason, that, under the system you have adopted, you put duty and interest on the same side, or, at any rate, you do not put them in opposition to each other. The object, as I understand it, where distribution is concerned, is to make the interest of the buyer and seller identical ; in fact, they are the same people. You get rid of the otherwise inevitable antagonism. Whether nominal profits are large or small, whether prices are high or low, is a matter of no moment where the money only comes out of one pocket to go into the other. Nobody wants to cheat himself, and the temptation to dishonest practices is withdrawn. They die out as the habit of smuggling disappears with free trade, or as drunkenness disappears when liquor cannot be got at; and in this way, without fuss or parade or pretensions to superior virtue, you put an end, so far as you are concerned, to a class of evils against which moralists have been preaching from the earliest days of civilisation with about the measure of success which preaching usually accomplishes. All that it is necessary to add on this head is that the good you do is not limited to your own members. You set an example which the outside public in its own interest will take care is not lost. Where stores have led the way shops must follow.

In the next place, I suppose we may take it for granted that where co-operation comes in the system of dealing on credit dies out, and I think it is hardly possible to overrate the economical and social gain by that result alone. Debt is the universal plague of this country. The State is in debt, as we know, to the tune of about nine years of its income. The great towns have started later in the race, but I am

bound to say they are making up for lost time and borrowing largely—I will not say recklessly. You will not find one land-owner in ten who is free from mortgages, and you will find, I am afraid, a good many who are really only collecting rents for the benefit of their creditors. A banker would be thought disobliging if he objected to a solvent customer overrawing his account, and we all know that a tradesman of the good old sort is content to wait almost indefinitely for his bill to be paid as long as he can charge interest on the amount. I do not speak of the extent to which mercantile and manufacturing business is done with borrowed money, partly because that is a matter of which I know very little, partly because there may be reasons to urge in defence of that arrangement which do not apply to the other cases I have cited. But to add a further illustration. I have been often told—it is very likely to be true—that the distress among farmers, both in England and Ireland, has been largely increased by their habit of borrowing in prosperous times, and that when the lenders are alarmed by successive bad seasons and call in their advances, there is naturally a collapse. Now, I do not enter into the difficult question of how far and under what circumstances business may fairly be done on the basis of credit instead of cash; but I contend that in the ordinary affairs of life the very best service which could be rendered to any man would be to make it impossible for him to buy anything, necessaries excepted, until he had got the money in hand to pay for it; and this is practically the result which would ensue in every community exclusively supplied on co-operative principles.

The first point of your charter is, I take it, ‘No adulteration;’ the second, ‘No running into debt.’ These two objects may, I suppose, be attained, and, in fact, are attained, by many associations which have not accepted the peculiar features of the co-operative system. Any persons may set up a joint-stock company for the purpose of supplying themselves, and run it on the principle of paying ready money and yet not be co-operators at all, as we read the

meaning of the word. What I understand to be your distinctive principle is this—that the worker should be paid according to the results of the work—that he should be wholly or in part his own employer. Now, what an outsider or casual inquirer would naturally ask about that principle is, How does it act as regards quantity and quality of industrial productions? How does it affect the happiness and comfort of those who adopt it? And how does it bear on the relations between labour and capital? These three, I think, are the main heads of our inquiry.

As to the first, it must strike any impartial observer that more work is likely to be done, and that it is likely to be better done, on the co-operative system than on that of ordinary wages, and for a very simple reason. In the former case every man is working for himself—for others also, no doubt, but among others for himself; in the latter case, he is working for an employer, with whose interests he cannot be expected to identify himself very warmly. It is only human nature that his zeal should be stimulated by knowing that he personally is to reap what he sows; whereas the man employed by the day or hour can scarcely be expected to care to do more than is required to secure himself from dismissal. But that is not all. In co-operative industry the master's eye is everywhere. I have heard it affirmed, whether truly or not I cannot judge, that in occupations where men are hired by the day it is an unpopular thing for any one to do more than his mates, and that the exhibition of more than ordinary industry and skill is likely to be resented rather than imitated and admired. But introduce co-operation, and every working man is an employer and an overseer too. The master's eye is literally everywhere. Slow work or scamped work means so much less return to the associated body, and those who are working together have the strongest possible interest, not only in doing their own appointed task, but in seeing that everybody else does his.

Then as to the effect on the workman himself. It is a commonplace to say that labour in which we take a keen

interest almost ceases to be labour at all, and that a very light task performed on compulsion and as mere drudgery is felt to be heavy. And if at the same time the worker knows that in every stroke of work he is helping his own comrades, not pulling against them ; that the more he does, the more he earns their good-will, and not their envy or jealousy ; and if, further, he has reason to suppose that, in however subordinate a capacity, he is helping on a movement which is for the permanent benefit of his country, he has motives to impel and feelings to encourage him which the ordinary labourer has not, and which may very well carry him over difficulties and discomforts such as are incident to every form of employment. It is sometimes objected, ‘Division of profits is very well where there are profits to divide ; but how if there are no profits, only losses ?’ To that I answer, ‘Supposing a private business, be it a mill or a shop or anything else, collapses in consequence of bad times, is the man who works in it for wages free from the results of failure ?’ No ; he loses his employment, and in a dull state of trade he may not, possibly, find another. The utmost that he gains is that his wages may be kept on a little longer while the employer is slowly consuming his capital ; and if a co-operative undertaking, no matter what, be worked with skill and care, it ought to be able to command as much capital to meet a temporary emergency as a similar undertaking in private hands.

My third point is that of all the ten thousand schemes hitherto proposed—and there is a new one about every six weeks—for closing the long-standing differences between capital and labour, co-operation is that which promises the largest results with the fewest drawbacks. I will not occupy time by speaking of what we all know : the waste of capital and the waste of labour (which is the same thing), the ill feeling, the bitterness which trade disputes carry with them. In such disputes we feel that the result is lamentable, yet we hardly know whom to blame. Is the capitalist wrong in refusing to pay higher wages than the market price ? Certainly not. He is not bound to do it, and if he did, his

neighbour, who has fewer benevolent impulses or scruples, would undersell him. Is the working man wrong in trying to get the best price he can for his labour and in combining with others for the purpose? Certainly not. It is both his natural and his legal right. Yet, both being in the right, millions of money are squandered, social feuds are created, sometimes riot and disturbance follow. Where there is on both sides a wish to discover reasonable terms of peace, the intervention of an impartial third party who shall hear both sides and decide is often effectual in bringing about an understanding. But arbitration is not always an applicable remedy; in fact, it is a remedy which can only be applied when the disease is in a fair way to be cured. Two parties to a dispute who both agree to refer it to an umpire are already halfway to an understanding; but when each is convinced of being in the right and quite convinced that the other is unreasonable, what chance is there of their consenting to refer the matter? And let me add that in labour questions, so far as my own experience goes, arbitration is never a wholly satisfactory process. I have sat more than once as umpire, and never without a feeling that I was asked to pronounce a judicial decision in a matter in which really there is no law to appeal to. There is usually not much doubt as to the facts. The question whether or not such-and-such a payment for labour is a fair one is in its nature insoluble. You cannot untie the knot, you have to cut it; and when it is cut, when the strike is over and work begins again, though the dispute is settled for a moment, the cause of it remains, the dormant antagonism of interests is not removed. You co-operators meet that difficulty, or rather you turn it. You say, 'There shall be no conflict of interests where we are concerned, for the two parties shall be identical; the employer shall be also the employed, and the profits of one the gain of the other.' It is, if I may use such an expression, like the settlement of an old family law-suit by the marriage of litigants. It ends the dispute, because there is nothing left to dispute about.

And what a dispute it is to end! Other conflicts seem drawing to a close, or are tacitly abandoned, because one side sees that victory is hopeless. We do not persecute one another for religion, because we have recognised the fact that men's religious ideas must be expected to differ indefinitely. We do not claim for any ruler or for any Government irresponsible authority, because we acknowledge the right of civilised nations at least to govern themselves. Even for our international relations, however imperfectly and unsuccessfully we may practise the doctrine, we admit that justice must be the supreme arbiter and peace the normal relation. But while the quarrels of former generations are either dying out or, at the worst, are assuming milder forms, the new industrial difficulty is growing into continually larger proportions with the continuance of external peace and the consequent increase of wealth.

Capital and labour hardly recognise that they are in opposition to one another as long as capital is on a small scale and no vast accumulations exist. But this is essentially a temporary state of things; the large business kills out the small one. You begin with the master working personally among the half-dozen men whom he employs, and you end with works employing several thousands of hands, and managed by millionaires in the literal sense of the word. The difference between the relative position of employer and employed tends to widen, not to diminish. Concede to trade unions all possible freedom of action, let them be managed with the utmost skill and prudence, and yet, to my thinking, in the battle they carry on, capital will win in the end, for this reason: The employer can afford to wait longer than the employed; he has reserve funds to fall back upon; he is only a little impoverished, a little thrown back in the race, where the operative is pinched for his daily food. Moreover, the article which the working man has to sell is one which in the very nature of things will not keep. He sells his labour, but obviously, if he cannot sell to-day's labour at the beginning of

the day, he cannot sell it at all. That portion of his stock has perished in a few hours. The employer also loses by the interruption of work; but he loses less, and he can afford it better. I do not, therefore, believe in unionism as a permanent and effective means of reconciliation between rival interests.

Nor have I more faith in legislation. The United States are the most democratic country now existing in the world, but nowhere in the world are individual fortunes made on so enormous a scale. They certainly exceed those of England, and that although the taxation on realised property is far heavier than here. You cannot legislate effectively to check industrial accumulations without a double risk—first, that of driving away capital, which is always timid, to other countries; and, next, that of setting men's feelings of personal justice against the law when it is made to appear that taxation is directed to the express purpose, perhaps, of impoverishing a class: not to mention that if a system of finance avowedly confiscatory be once set on foot it is not easy to keep it within what its promoters may consider reasonable limits. And yet, if no remedy be found, if class differences widen instead of narrow, the prospect is not cheerful. Given the condition that nearly all political power is virtually in one class—as under a system of household suffrage it is, whenever the class chooses to take it—and nearly all the surplus wealth which men desire to possess is in the hands of another class, how long will you be able to avert an explosion? It is an awkward problem, and, like a nasty brook or fence to a hunting man, the longer you look at it the worse it seems. Yet in one way or another we have to face it, and it is my deliberate belief that you, the co-operators, if you have not solved the difficulty altogether, are at least moving in the direction which promises the most effectual and the most equitable solution. These, as it seems to me, are the three substantial and indisputable gains of the co-operative movement—no motive for fraud, no liability to debt, no room for

dispute between employer and employed, and I own, for my part, I am content to stop there. If you accomplish these things you will have done more for the world, or rather for the portion of it which adopts your ideas, than has been done, or is likely to be done, by any other agency with which I am acquainted.

LVI

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

LIVERPOOL : OCTOBER 3, 1881

THE agreeable duty of presenting the prizes won by students of the Medical Society has been discharged, and it only remains for me, according to custom, to address to you one or two remarks. They will be very few, for two reasons—first, because I cannot flatter myself that words of advice or encouragement coming from a stranger will seriously influence young men who have deliberately chosen their career in life; and next, because counsel addressed to professional men comes best from those who have gone through the same training, and can speak from personal experience. You students have selected among the various occupations open to you one of which the interest and importance can scarcely be exaggerated. The services of the soldier or the sailor, invaluable as they are, are not always, happily in our day they are not often, in requisition; but the war against disease is constant and never-ending. The lawyer, bound by his instructions and by the customary requirements of his profession, cannot always feel that his success, however honourable and deserved, is the triumph of justice; but the saving of life is work which no man can regret, however slight the apparent value may be of the individual's life so rescued. The ecclesiastic and the politician live in an atmosphere of controversy, and are daily compelled to affirm and to act upon convictions which, nevertheless, fall far short of certainty. The art of the physician may also err; but, if it does, Nature has a very speedy and effectual way of pointing out his mistake. The

student of abstract science gratifies in the fullest measure the intellectual requirements of his nature, and he may be sustained by a perfectly just conviction of the ultimate utility of his work ; but the stimulus of a direct and visible result is most frequently wanting to his exertions. Your privilege, the privilege of your chosen employment, is—and a high and enviable one I call it—that you can largely satisfy the intellectual impulse to know and to discover on the one hand, while on the other you can equally, in the ordinary routine of your duty, do useful service to your fellow-men. Intellectually considered, the subject of your study is that which most deeply concerns us all.

It has grown into a proverb that the proper study of mankind is man ; and in this age, when the intimate connection of body and mind are recognised—when we know that no thought, no feeling, no emotion, can pass over the human frame without leaving traces of its passage—the enormous importance of studying the physical organisation of our race is less than ever likely to be disregarded. The ultimate mystery of existence can never be solved ; but on the conditions of existence every successive generation of inquirers throws a clearer and clearer light, and in that line of research, never exhausted nor capable of being exhausted, there is space enough for the highest ambition, and interest enough to compensate for much of mere drudgery and dullness. But there is another and, perhaps, a more practical aspect in which the profession of which we speak may be regarded. Medical science applies itself more directly than any other to the promotion of human well-being and the prevention of human suffering. And it does more than that. Those who practise it are the guardians, so to speak, of the national health, and I need not tell you what is implied in that practice. The struggle for existence between races, as between individuals, is incessant. The strongest must win in the end ; and the very first condition of a strong race is that it shall be physically healthy. In no age of the world have sanitary matters attracted so much attention as in ours, and

in the extension of life and the diminution of disease we are reaping the fruit of what has been done during the last twenty or thirty years. I need not point out, in connection with that subject, how great is the power and the influence of the medical adviser on distress; nor need I dwell on what is obvious enough—the demand made upon him for courage and honesty to speak the whole truth where scientific matters are in question, where money is on one side and health on the other, and when plain speech may give serious offence in quarters where offence is dangerous.

But it is not in such questions alone that the moral as well as the intellectual qualities of the physician are constantly called into play. He has to deal, not with dead matter, but with men and women; he has to witness and experience their caprices, their passions, their weaknesses, and of these last at least he sees more than the members of any other profession, and that is no light burden to bear. He must be firm, under penalty of being useless. He must be sympathetic, or the experience of his daily life will force him into cynicism. He must avoid needless pugnacity and antagonism, yet without yielding in any essential point to the quackery and empiricism in which a half-educated public delights. But, on the other hand, he probably enjoys more of the confidence of those with whom he has to do than any other adviser. We do not in these days confess ourselves to priests, but we do confess ourselves—generally with great sincerity—to our lawyers and our physicians. For the great office, as I most seriously call it, of a trusted medical adviser there is wanting more than fine science, though that must necessarily be the basis; he must have tact, judgment, firmness in opinion, courtesy and gentleness in expression.

One thing more I will add—there is, happily, in all departments of life much unpaid service freely and ungrudgingly rendered, often by men who might be excused if they thought first of their own scantily provided families. But I assert with some confidence that the absolutely

gratuitous assistance given by the medical profession to those who are unable to pay for it far exceeds that which is bestowed or demanded in any other line of life; and it is not less creditable to those who give it because custom has in great measure caused it to be expected as a matter of course. Whether it is equally creditable to the public that it should be expected to the extent it is, is a different question, into which I need not now enter. What I here say to you medical students may be summed up in one word—respect your profession and respect yourselves. You have great examples before you, you have noble traditions to follow, you have exceptional opportunities of leading a life not only blameless, but intellectual, and publicly useful. Remember that each one of you, young as he may be, can do something to honour or, so willing, to discredit his profession. I have no doubt which your choice will be; and I hope many of you may look back from a respected and honoured professional position on these early days of discipline and training.

LVII

*LORD DERBY'S CHANGE OF PARTY—PROCEDURE
OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—IRELAND—THE
ENGLISH LAND QUESTION*

LIVERPOOL: JANUARY 4, 1882

I THANK you warmly and sincerely for the kindness of this reception. It is a memorable one to me, because it is the first which I have ever experienced from a meeting of the Liberal party.¹ There are always some circumstances attending a change of political connection which are disagreeable, and even painful. It cannot be otherwise, and it is right, in the public interest, that it should be so; but for myself personally, though a change of political alliances must always imply some modification of political ideas, I have not much to

¹ Lord Derby publicly announced that he had joined the Liberal party by the following letter to Lord Sefton on March 12, 1880:—

‘23, St. James’s Square:

‘March 12, 1880.

‘DEAR SEFTON,—You have told me, and others have said the same, that many of my friends in Lancashire expect from me a more explicit declaration of political opinion than I have hitherto made. Under present circumstances I cannot refuse to comply with their wish. I have been long unwilling to separate from the political connection in which I was brought up, and with which, notwithstanding occasional differences on non-political questions, I have, in the main, acted for many years; but the present situation of parties, and the avowed policy of the Conservative leader in reference to foreign relations, leaves me no choice. I cannot support the present Government, and as neutrality—however, from present feelings, I might prefer it—at a political crisis is an evasion of public duty, I have no choice except to declare myself, however reluctantly, ranked among their opponents. You may make any use of this letter that you please.

‘Believe me, yours truly,

‘DERBY.’

unsay of what I have said in former years. I have been a Conservative; a high Tory, or indeed a Tory at all, if I can attach any definite meaning to the word, I never have been. High notions of prerogative and ecclesiastical privilege have found no defender in me, and still less have I ever sympathised with that curious development of modern sentiment which has got the name of Jingoism, and of which I suppose the leading idea to be that no State can be in a healthy condition that is not occasionally pitching into its neighbour. In one respect—I am not ashamed to own it—I have profited by experience and observation. I have learned more and more forcibly the uselessness, to put it on no other ground, of attempting to resist the progress of popular ideas, and I have come to think more and more highly of the moderation, the fairness, and the general justice with which masses of men, including all conditions of life, are disposed to use their power. Considering the great diversities of fortune in this country, I should have expected in 1867, when the franchise was enlarged, a certain display of class feeling and of jealousy, not to say of bitterness against the rich, such as is visible in Continental politics. I do not observe in England or Scotland a trace of any such feeling, and I believe that if the wealthy and educated classes will act with sense and prudence, if they will put themselves at the head of movements leading up to necessary reforms, they will not find their real interests exposed to much danger, and they may retain a large share of their former influence in the State.

I am not going to waste your time by a controversial defence of the policy of the present Cabinet. Criticism is the legitimate function of an opposition, and it is a duty the performance of which they do not often neglect; but the duty of a majority, and a majority in possession of power, is not criticism but action. It is not their business to dwell upon the past, but to provide for the future. What was done in 1881 is now a matter of only historical interest; the question that concerns us is, What is going to be done in 1882? Gentlemen, I think there is a very general

concurrence of opinion that the first work on hand is the improvement of the procedure of the House of Commons. You must sharpen your tools—they have got terribly blunt of late years—before you can use them with effect. We have to deal with obstruction of two kinds—that which is wilful and wanton, and that which arises from more innocent motives. Now, it is often said that obstructionists can be best dealt with separately and personally. I do not agree in that, because, though, if obstruction be carried beyond a certain point, you can undoubtedly treat it as an offence, yet twenty, thirty, or forty members relieving one another, and acting with the deliberate purpose of spinning out debate, can accomplish their object without any one of them making the mischievous intention evident. And when you come to the other and far more numerous class of obstructionists, those who mean no harm, whose only fault is vanity and loquacity, who only seek notoriety, or to make a figure in the eyes of their constituents, or who set a higher value upon what they suppose to be their opinions than their neighbours are apt to do, it is absurd to talk of punishing them. There is only one remedy: the House must do formally what after all it now does informally; it must fix a period when debate shall close. It is argued that, if that is done, minorities will be unfairly silenced. If that were so, no one would suffer more than the Liberals, who generally begin by being in a small minority. But it does not follow, if the *cloture* is to be adopted, that it shall be adopted by a bare plurality of votes. Such a procedure would be, in my judgment, liable to abuse, and it would be going beyond the necessities of the occasion. If debates can be closed by the vote of three-fourths of those present, or, if you will, of three-fourths of the entire House, I think you may trust to the rivalry of political parties to prevent the rule being enforced except where it is really required. And we must remember two things—first, that Parliament in these days has got to act as well as talk; next, that a section which has not got one-fourth of the House on its side can practically do nothing more even now than protest, and,

under modern conditions, it can do that outside the House as well as inside.

There are two other expedients which it may be well to consider. Do we require a bill to pass through so many stages? I have always supposed that our system of three readings came down to us from a time when bills were not put into print, and when members only knew what was in them by hearing them read out. Surely, if you have one debate upon the principle, then a thorough sifting in Committee, and, lastly, another debate when the bill comes out of Committee, you have all the discussion that is really wanted. And the other expedient I refer to is the dividing of the House into large Committees, so that several bills of first-rate importance may be passing through Committee at the same time. The only doubt I feel about it is whether the House would consent to delegate so much of its authority to any section of its members in a matter of really first-rate importance; but, however the thing is done, I fancy we are all of one mind that the expediting of procedure is about the first job to be taken in hand.

[Lord Derby then touched on county and London government and the extension of the franchise in the counties, subjects on which there has since been legislation.]

There are, as we know, other important matters to deal with, none perhaps specially pressing, nor likely to call out strong party feeling. All I say about them here is that I trust the Cabinet and Parliament will make up their minds to do with them either one thing or another—either to let them alone for the year, or to push them steadily through. There is no such effective kind of obstruction as that which is wholly unintended, and which comes from the natural desire of every Government to carry through more measures than there is time for. Every department likes to have its bill in Parliament, and the end is they obstruct one another. And there is more involved than mere loss of time. The House gets sick of a subject which has been discussed again and again

without result, and the oftener it has been shelved the more likely it is to be shelved again.

But, gentlemen, we all know that none of these administrative reforms or constitutional changes, enormously important as they may be, are foremost in our minds at the present time. They can all wait if necessary. What cannot wait is the work of restoring order and peace in Ireland. Those of you who know the opinions which I have expressed, know that I do not take a very cheerful or sanguine view of the situation. I am afraid the discontent and the dislike of English rule, the vague but powerful sentiment of nationality, which we have so often witnessed abroad, have a deeper hold of the Irish mind than we on this side have been willing to admit. What is asked for under the name of Home Rule is a separate Parliament; and I am afraid I must say I believe that is a very general wish among the Irish masses. What are we to do? There is no escape from the dilemma. If we grant their wish we virtually break up the Empire; for I suppose everybody can see that a Parliament, however limited at first in powers, once established in Dublin, would very soon shake off any dependence on the Parliament sitting at Westminster. If we resist—and personally I do not see that we have any choice—we must frankly accept the fact that we are overruling the will of a local majority, and, for my part, I see nothing arbitrary or despotic in so doing.

The relations of England and Ireland concern not the Irish alone, but the whole 35 millions of our population; and I cannot doubt that of those 35 millions there is an overwhelming proportion in favour of maintaining the connection in its present form. The will of the majority, it is argued, ought to rule. Certainly; I accept that doctrine. I do more; I assert it. But, in a matter that concerns the entire community, it is the majority of the whole community, and not of any part of it, to which I refer. There is one thing that we have a right to ask, and that is, that in a time of disturbance and difficulty the Government of the day shall have the support of all parties in the State. It is not a time for calling

names, for bitter and angry speeches about things which are done and which cannot be undone. The latest charge against the Government is that they have been slack in their efforts to preserve or to restore order. I believe that a more groundless accusation was never brought against any set of men. It is absurd, because the Ministry of the day, whoever they may be, have more to lose by the continuance of disorder, and more to gain by putting an end to it, than any other set of men can have. They have, I believe, done what is possible and necessary. If there is disappointment as to what they have accomplished, that is, in my belief, due to the fact that we have underrated the gravity of the situation. They have strengthened the police, they have not shrunk from using the powers which the law gives them in the way of arrests, and they have, at least, effected this result—that in parts of the country which are seething with disaffection there has been no open outbreak.

People talk of proclaiming martial law. What use would that be against private murders, outrages, and a systematic refusal to pay rents? You might just as well advise a householder, who is afraid of burglars, to protect himself by planting cannon before his door. We hear loud complaints against the decisions of the Land Courts,¹ and we are told that a demand should be made for compensation to landlords who have suffered by these decisions. Now, as to the first point, I think we ought to suspend our judgment. Very few cases have been tried, and, I believe, no appeals. Parliament has, no doubt, a right to ask and to know on what principle the Land Commissioners are exercising the enormous discretion they possess. That is a fair subject for inquiry, especially after some rather wild utterances which have been indulged in by their subordinates. And we have a right also to ascertain that due judgment has been exercised in the choice of those subordinates. But it is not fair play to condemn them

¹ The Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, by which among other things a Land Commission was constituted to fix fair rents, was now attracting much public attention.

unheard, nor to take a few cases, which may be extreme cases, as though they were necessarily typical. As to compensation, without denying that there are instances in which it might be in the abstract just, I cannot see how it can be practically managed. You would have to try every case over again. You must exclude the claim of those land-owners who, voluntarily or under pressure, have settled with their tenants out of Court. You must exclude equally the case of those liberal and indulgent landlords whose rents will not be reduced to any appreciable extent, because they have freely waived much which they might with justice have demanded; and, of course, it is not contended that compensation should be given to those who may have really abused their powers. The only persons on behalf of whom a plausible case can be made out are those who may have been harshly or hastily dealt with by the judges. But till the appeals are tried how can we tell who they are, and how are we to pick them out of the mass?

I would say further, though respecting proprietary rights as sincerely as any one, that in a time of revolutionary disturbance—and that is the state of things in Ireland—those whom the State, at infinite cost and trouble, is struggling to preserve may fairly be asked to accept the necessity of some sacrifice on their side. Leave the Irish people and the land-owners face to face, and we know what would happen. There would very soon be an end of all rent, and an end of Irish landlords, too, so far as residence in Ireland is concerned. Men, whom a lifeboat has dragged out from a vessel going to pieces on the rocks, must not complain too loudly if they lose some of their property in the process. As to the future, I think our course is plain. Let us grant reforms by all means—decentralisation in any practicable shape—but let us hold out no false hopes of independence, or of a federal system which never can work between two countries so closely connected as England and Ireland. And, on the other hand, let us have no more scolding. We are the stronger party, and can afford to keep our tempers. I have faith in time. When people see that what they wish for is fairly and finally

out of reach, they first cease to try for it, and in the end to think about it at all. Let us hope it may be so with Home Rule. America is not a despotic nor a reactionary country, but we know how America dealt with secession, and we see how soon and how thoroughly the traces of a sanguinary contest have disappeared. I do not see why we should show less determination, or have less good fortune.

From Irish land to English land the transition is natural ; but one cannot, at the end of a speech, enter upon that enormous question of the English land laws. It is not one question, but half a dozen ; and many of the proposals that are put forward are in direct contradiction to one another. The single remark I will venture on is this—before we proceed to legislate, let us ask ourselves what our object is. Do we intend that the land shall yield the largest return of profit to its owners, or do we mean that it is to be made to produce the largest quantity of food for the public, or do we desire, as some people seem to do, that it should be so worked as to employ the largest possible number of people upon it ? Because these three objects are quite distinct from one another—not only distinct, but incompatible, and you must settle what you aim at before you know what you want to do. Or to put it in another way—Do you want permanent improvements to be made by the landlord or by the tenant ? We have to choose between the two. There are some things which even Parliament cannot effect, and one of them is to create in two different sets of persons a feeling of ownership as regards the same estate. Up to a certain point, I think, we see our way. Nearly everybody agrees that the present restrictions on the transfer of land cannot be maintained. I do not think it ought to be difficult to make nearly every acre in England saleable. Heavily encumbered estates are a public nuisance, and I accept and share in the general opinion that an increase in the number of landowners is desirable in the interest of the class itself.

As to the relations of landlord and tenant, I shall be quite ready to support any fair plan of compensating a tenant for

unexhausted improvements ; but I think we shall not do wisely if we commit ourselves to any scheme of allowing him to sell what is called his interest, which really means selling something that does belong to him and a good deal that does not. These, however, are matters not very urgent ; for just now, as you know, the tenant is in a better position to make his own terms than he has been in the memory of man. He is really master of the situation, and the excessive competition for land which has always been put forward as the basis on which Irish land reforms were to rest certainly does not exist in England. As to plans, such as have lately been laid before you in this city by an intelligent and able gentleman, Mr. Jesse Collings, for cutting up estates and selling them in small bits to working men, I think that they will keep. There is nothing very revolutionary in them if you pay the owners fairly for what you take ; but they would lead to a good deal of jobbing, and if any such demand for land in small lots exists, as is supposed, I do not see why you need call in the State to do what private companies are perfectly capable of doing. I have detained you longer than I wished—longer than I ought—but I thought it best on such an occasion as this to make a full confession of political faith, and tell you what I should do, and what I should be prepared to support, in regard to the main questions of the moment. We do not live in quiet or easy times ; but prudence and courage in the history of this England of ours have carried us successfully through many difficulties and dangers, and I confidently believe that by the exercise of those qualities we shall again triumph over any obstacles now or in future.

LVIII

*FREE TRADE—PROTECTION IN THE COLONIES—
PROTECTION IN THE UNITED STATES—COMMERCIAL TREATIES—THE POLICY OF COBDEN*

LONDON : JULY 1, 1882

I RISE now to propose to you the toast of the evening, ‘Prosperity to the Cobden Club.’ More than a generation has gone by since the close of the great struggle on the Corn Laws; half as many years have elapsed since the death of the remarkable man who was the leader in that battle. So far as we in England are concerned, the controversy which he carried on has only an historical interest. The issue is decided, and will not be raised again within any period to which we can look forward. I assert this confidently, and I assert it with the full knowledge that a certain ghost or shadow of protection still walks the earth. Fair trade, I believe, is the name of that not very formidable apparition; but, as every practical politician on either side knows, it is a ghost only, and not a reality. Let those amuse themselves with trying to lay it who have nothing else to do. We say that, apart from all arguments founded on general principles, protection cannot be revived, because the artisans—the town population, those who are not concerned in agriculture—are not in the least likely to submit to a tax on their food; and unless corn and meat and other produce are included among protected articles agriculturists will not thank you for increasing the price of other articles which they consume and do not produce. To put the matter in another way, if we were to take it into our heads to retaliate on the Americans, the chief protectionist nation in the world, we could not do it by taxing

luxuries, for they send us none ; we could only tax food, which our own people would not stand, and raw materials, which would be simply injuring our own industries. Therefore, so far as home affairs are concerned, I look on the question as settled. I am quite aware that at this point I may be met by an objection taken from another point of view. I may be told, ‘Talk about free trade being secured ! You have never had it ; you raise twenty millions by duties on imports.’ Well, it often happens that people who talk over matters together find that they are using the same terms in different senses, and the word ‘free trade’ is perhaps not free from ambiguity. If it be said that there is no free trade while any import is taxed—that a clean sweep ought to be made of customs and custom-houses—then, no doubt, we are not free traders, nor is any country in the world, so far as I am aware. You cannot get rid, in England, of customs without doing away with excise duties also : you could not, for instance, let in spirits from abroad untaxed, and keep up the tax on those made at home. And whatever many of us might personally prefer if we could frame the world anew to our liking, I suppose there are not many living politicians who expect to see an end both of customs and excise. But the general interpretation put on the word ‘free trade’ is something different. It is commonly understood, I think, to mean only the absence of protection, the placing foreign produce on exactly the same footing as our own, the taxing of imports for revenue purposes only, and the removal of all duties not absolutely necessary for that purpose. In this sense we have been consistent free traders, at least ever since the shilling duty on corn was abolished ; and though, when opportunity serves, we shall be glad to see the still remaining duties lightened, yet I do not conceive that the Cobden Club, or any other body of free traders, has ever pledged itself collectively to a total abolition of customs.

Passing from home affairs, what are our prospects in the Colonies ? There is no use in refusing to look at events as they are ; and undoubtedly the ideas which prevail in our

most important Colonies are not what English free traders would wish to see there. The controversy, which practically has closed at home, there still remains open. Protection is accepted and believed in as a system by a large part of the colonial communities. Now, I do not know that we ought to be startled, though we may be disappointed, at that state of things. We are apt to forget that our circumstances at the time of the struggles for the repeal of the Corn Law were peculiar, and such as do not exist in a new country. English free traders had immense advantages in two respects: the taxes which they mainly voted against were taxes on food, the most unpopular, naturally, of any; and the class which was chiefly supposed to benefit by these taxes was numerically small, and one against which it is always easy to raise democratic feeling. It was not a question of the rich against the poor; it was a question in which a small section of the rich (and it is fair to say many of the poor also) found themselves in antagonism at once to the mercantile and manufacturing plutocracy and to the main body of the working classes. We are apt to argue, 'The principle has been victorious here; why not everywhere?' but I am afraid we must admit that, so far as the masses are concerned, the victory never has been, and never will be, one of abstract reasoning. We cannot alter the conditions under which we live; the masses decide these questions, and it is not their habit to study long columns of figures, nor to weigh nice and carefully constructed arguments against each other. They follow a much simpler guide. The English democracy said, when English protection was in question, 'Here are laws which make our food dear; let us get rid of them;' but the colonial democracy say of protection as it concerns them, 'Here are laws which keep up the price of our labour; they ought to be maintained.' In England, they look at the matter from the point of view of consumers; in Australia and Canada, they are apt to look at it from the point of view of producers. I do not think they will be converted by reasoning; but the test of experience is a sure one. And, luckily, experience will not be

wanting. As if on purpose that the experiment should be fairly tried, the two most important Australian Colonies have adopted an opposite policy—Victoria goes for protection, New South Wales for free trade. They are very similarly circumstanced in other respects, so that it is a perfectly fair fight, and we, at least, are not likely to feel any doubt as to the result.

There is another thing which ought to be noted when the prevalence of protectionist ideas in the Colonies is talked of. How far are those ideas really protectionist? How far do they grow out of a deliberate preference for the protective system, or how far are they the result of financial expediency and financial difficulties? We know that our leading Colonies are going ahead at a great rate in expenditure as well as in resources. I will not say that they are going too fast, for they have an immense future, and their present burdens will be as nothing to them fifty years hence; but what with selling land and treating the proceeds as revenue on the one hand, and what with piling up debts on the other, they are drawing pretty heavily on their future. Now, direct taxes are not popular anywhere, least of all in a young country where there is very little accumulated capital. Indirect taxes are very often, though of course not always, protective, and it is a powerful reinforcement to the Protectionist party in a Colony when they can say, ‘If you take off protective duties you must submit to a heavy income tax or land tax.’ The moral of that is this: that if colonists are to be free traders, they must not outrun the constable. Free trade and economy are inseparable. Large expenditure in a young country means large import duties, and they open the door to protection. No doubt I may be told that the protective system is adopted in some Colonies from an entirely different cause; that the policy is accepted and believed in for its own sake. I do not deny it; I do not see that it can be denied. There is something in it of pure selfishness—of precisely the same feeling which makes the colonial working men object to Chinese immigrants, or, indeed, to any immigrants at all in large

numbers. They have got a monopoly of the labour market, and they mean to keep it. They do not as yet see that in lessening the general wealth of the country they are lessening the demand for their own labour. That is one of the lessons which experience will teach them, and probably before many years are over. But no doubt there is another feeling at work with which it is still more difficult to argue, as it does not rest on any basis of reason. The wish that a country should produce within itself all that it requires may sometimes be due to an exaggerated caution. It was so in the case of M. Thiers, one of the shrewdest of mankind, who knew as well as we do the economical advantages of free trade, but who thought that France ought to be self-supporting in view of a possible coalition against her. But very often it is a mere unreasoning dislike of having to rely on outside help.

We all know (and many of us understand) the feeling of the country gentleman who likes to grow his own fruit and kill his own mutton, though quite aware that it costs him more than if he bought both in the market; and I think, among Americans especially, some feeling of that kind may be traced. They like the notion that they can do without Europe, though they would not at all like the inference inseparable from it that Europe could do without them. As to what is said about the advantages of providing a variety of occupations, that is a plea which one can hardly suppose is seriously used; but there is an argument far more plausible and, therefore, far more dangerous; colonists will tell us that they quite agree that as a permanent thing protection is inexpedient, but that just as beginners learn to swim with corks, so a young country has a right to foster its native industries until they are strong enough to hold their own. Well, that may be merely an excuse; but if it is seriously meant, a more mischievous delusion cannot well be started. Those who use the argument sincerely do not see that they are tying their own hands in the future. It is the idlest of all follies to suppose that when you have created a body of

protected interests, guaranteed by the State against all external competition, you will be able to withdraw the protection under which they have grown up. If they are not powerful and flourishing, then no doubt it may be possible ; but in that case the expedient of temporary protection has failed to accomplish its purpose ; if they are powerful and flourishing, they will be too strong to be treated in that way.

I do not see, as regards the Colonies, that we can do anything directly to check the growth of the protective spirit. We know that, however loyal they may be and are to the British connection, the slightest hint that can be made to look like dictation from Downing Street is sure to drive them in the opposite direction. All I think we can do is not to encourage or advise an increased colonial expenditure—it must be paid for somehow, and it will probably be paid for out of protective duties.

It is hardly worth while in this presence to expose the absurdity of that well-meant proposal which we sometimes hear of, according to which the British Empire should be formed into a Zollverein, absolute free trade being the rule within it, and protection against all outside. It is impracticable as involving the necessary co-operation of a number of distant and free Legislatures which are not the least likely to surrender their commercial independence ; it would open the widest possible door to the largest possible number of frauds, and it would not even please those classes at home, if there are any, who still retain a wish for protection. Take the case of Canada, for instance. According to this ingenious scheme Canadian corn would come in free, but Russian corn, or that from the States, would be taxed. The English farmer would not get what he is supposed to want, and the English working man would be paying more for his loaf in order to give a bounty to colonists who, as a rule, are better off than himself. As regards the United States—I say it with regret—I believe it would be idle to hold very hopeful language at this moment. Undoubtedly, protection is dominant in the New World, and the States are so rich in their soil, in their

influx of population, and in their boundless future, that they can hardly ruin themselves if they try. All one can say is that American politics show many instances of sharp and sudden turns, and that sooner or later free trade must become a sectional question. Western farmers will not always enjoy the notion of paying tribute to Eastern manufacturers ; and if, as I believe, the States which profit by protection are the minority of the whole (I might say even a small minority), that is a circumstance which in a popular Government and among a singularly intelligent people must tell in the long run. Perhaps, also, the growth of a Socialist movement, directed against private property in all forms, and especially against property in land, may lead American statesmen to consider whether it is wise to maintain a system which undoubtedly tends to build up vast private fortunes at the general expense. In the meanwhile, we have to recollect that the case of the Americans is peculiar. They have America to themselves ; they, unwisely as we think, are protectionists as against Europe, but over an area as large as Europe within the Union itself there exists absolute free trade. Their constitution and their geographical position do much to neutralise the mistakes of their policy. That is no comfort to us certainly, but it is an excuse for them.

I have said already that to free traders the sky is at this moment overcast, but in one quarter there is a prospect of better things. Light comes to us from the the East, and considering the many difficulties that surround Indian finance, and the uncertainty of a part of the Indian revenue, it is a bold step, as well as a wise one, that the Finance Minister of India has taken. We have now in India a nearer approximation to absolute free trade than exists anywhere except in England. All customs duties have been swept off, except those on wines, spirits, opium, arms, and ammunition, and on one or two more. There are no internal transit duties as in the old days of native States, and it is probably the first time in the history of the world that so vast an area, and so enormous a population, have been practically set free from

commercial restrictions. If we owe to the people of India, as I think we do, reparation for some acts of past aggression and injustice, we are in the right way to make it now.

When discussing the general principle of free trade, there is a wide field of thought into which I do not care to ask you now to enter, but which deserves serious attention. We are constantly calling on the State to control and regulate our relations with one another more and more closely—how long people are to work, how they are to be taught, what they are to drink, what sort of houses they are to live in ; in all these matters, and many others, we are perpetually invoking Parliament to interfere. I am not arguing that that tendency is wrong—it is a vast question, but I think that its indirect effect is not favourable to freedom of trade ; for the principle upon which free trade rests is that of the sufficiency of the individual to attend to his own interests, and it is natural for the average man, for the untaught man, to ask, If the State can manage men's business for them in many departments of life better than they can manage it for themselves, why is trade to be the exception ? It may be that we cannot help ourselves, but it is at least worth while to note the existence of a difficulty from which probably we cannot escape.

Of our prospects and improved commercial relations with European countries there is much to be said, and I believe we need not be despondent. The world of free traders has long been divided on the subject of commercial treaties. They are objected to by many persons partly on the general ground that it is unwise to sanction the principle of reciprocity by making tariff reductions matters of international bargain, partly for the more special and cogent reason that it is not wise for England to begin bargaining when she has already given away gratis nearly all that she might have kept to trade with. In that last criticism there is force, and every English negotiator must feel it ; but the controversy is really one of practical expediency rather than of abstract theory ; and if through the machinery of a treaty we can get better terms than without one, I think most people will be content to put

their objections in their pockets. With France especially the political advantage of closer relations is so great that we ought, I think, to make some sacrifice rather than forego it. It is not a question of trade only ; it is a question—to use a phrase which I am not fond of, but which is sometimes convenient—of ‘high policy’ as well. There is nothing more certain than this, that trade is the great preventive of war. Religion has not served to check wars ; they were never more frequent or more barbarously carried on than in the ages when faith was unshaken, and when every man was a believer. Forms of government have not sufficed to check war, for we have seen democracies as pugnacious as Governments of any other character ; and I am afraid that we can hardly contend that even the general increase of intelligence has done much to make men peaceable. But if you so connect two countries that neither can injure the other without equally injuring itself at the same time, you have, not indeed a perfect guarantee against quarrels, for that is impossible, but a better guarantee than any other yet devised. The most plucky of pugilists would hardly care to fight if the arrangement of Nature were such that every blow he struck hurt him as much as it hurt his opponent ; and that is really the position of two countries between which close commercial intercourse exists.

People sometimes say, ‘Look at the great expectations which were formed between 1846 and 1853, and see how they have been disappointed.’ If it is meant that a good many confident predictions have been falsified, that is true enough—the same thing has happened very often before, and will happen very often again. But if it is said that free trade has failed to check the fighting propensities of men, I deny that utterly ; an experiment cannot be said to fail which has never been tried. There has been no general adoption of free trade principles throughout Europe, and, until they are adopted, I do not see how any man can decide that they will not have the result which their first promoters expected. As far as this country is concerned, I think we do see a very marked change. There is much less inclination than of old on the

part of the English people to become principals in every quarrel ; and though four years ago there seemed to be a reaction, we know how that ended : 1880 showed us what the actual public feeling was in that matter. I deny, therefore, that the policy of Cobden has been a failure. He was too sanguine—most reformers are. I suppose without that temperament a man can hardly be a reformer. He allowed perhaps too little for the influence of various passions on men ; but where is the public teacher, I ask again, in any age and country, who has fully realised his ideal ? A man is not to be deprived of credit for what he has done because he himself expected to do more ; and it is unreasonable to talk as if a new principle had been tried and found wanting, when it has hardly even been preached in Europe for more than thirty years, and hardly acted upon except by one single country. The world moves slowly, and for my part, if it were to change its ways of thinking in a few years, I should not be sanguine of the change being permanent. Quick growth means quick decay, and with ideas as with plants, those that are longest in coming to maturity are likely also to be longest in lasting. That peace, not war, is the normal condition of States ; that they are gainers, not losers, by each other's prosperity ; that ideas, rather than arms, in the long run, decide the destinies of mankind : these are the principles which this Club endeavours to promote ; and, as we firmly believe them to be true, we shliould distrust the very laws of our being if we did not expect them to be victorious.

LIX

*AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES—TRANSFER OF LAND—
PEASANT PROPRIETORS—COMPENSATION FOR
IMPROVEMENTS.*

LIVERPOOL : SEPTEMBER 6, 1883

. . . . It would be a waste of time to speak about the benefits of these exhibitions ; we all know and admit them ; but there is just one thing I should like to say. I think it will be a great misfortune if the multiplication of small district societies—against which I have nothing to say ; they are excellent in their place—but I say it would be a great misfortune if the multiplication of these societies were to draw off support from the larger associations which go over the whole extent of the country. There is a great deal to be said for small local district meetings ; there is much pleasure and some profit to be derived from them ; but if you come to consider what is for the real benefit of the farmer, then it is the large and not the small societies which do the real work.

Now I suppose you will expect me to say a few words in reference to the various classes connected with the land. We have not in this part of the country suffered much, comparatively speaking, even at the worst of times—I mean when compared with the southern and midland counties—but no doubt the last few years have been bad everywhere both for land-owners and occupiers ; and so far from wondering that some expressions of discontent and irritation have been occasionally heard, and that some wild speculations have been indulged in, I must say it has always been to me a matter of surprise to see with what patience, with what good feeling,

and with what mutual helpfulness all classes have joined to meet the difficulties which they had to face. Some part of our trouble is inevitable and can only be accepted. We cannot alter the weather, and although the present season has not been altogether favourable, still I hope we may say it has been a considerable improvement upon those which have gone before. We cannot, again, expect to exclude by any artificial agency that foreign competition which many of us feel severely. That is a question practically settled and disposed of, or else I should not refer to it here. But we can do much to insure that our resources shall be turned to the best account, and in that respect a great deal has been done, though, of course, the full effect of it cannot be immediately felt.

There have been, as long as most of us can remember, two principal grounds of complaint on the part of those who think, as I do, that more could be made than has been made of the soil of England. One was that land could not be easily bought and sold—that it was practically locked up from public use; and that the tenant was not sufficiently protected in regard to any improvements which he might make. Now, as to the first grievance, as many of you know, because I have said the same thing before, I think it was at all times considerably exaggerated. I do not believe that it has ever in the last thirty years been difficult for a man who had money in his pocket to buy an estate, and I confess I do not see what change in the law will make it possible for a man who has not money in his pocket, or who cannot get money from somebody else, to become a landed proprietor. But, however that may be, it certainly is not now the case that land is kept back from public use. It is easier, I am perfectly convinced—and I speak from a good deal of observation and experience—at the present time, and has been for some time back, to buy an estate than it is to sell one. I will affirm that if any rich man, even one of those millionaires in the New World of whom we hear so much, were to take a fancy to invest his five or ten or fifteen millions in British soil, he might have to wait a little for an operation on so large a scale; but it would not

be many months, perhaps not many weeks, before he would be able to accomplish his purpose. Partly that readiness to sell is the result of bad times, partly it arises from a most natural and laudable desire—which I am glad to see that landlords are more and more feeling—to disencumber their estates and so hold themselves prepared to meet any emergencies that may come ; partly it is the result of an exaggerated misapprehension of what the Legislature may be inclined to do in regard to land, and partly also I think it is due to the very useful measure which has passed through the present Parliament enabling settled estates to be sold with very few limitations and conditions.¹

No doubt that will not always remain so, and we shall hear more about entails and settlements by-and-by ; but, so far as the wants of the intending purchaser are concerned, I do not think he has much to complain of in the present state of things, and I think, with the present considerably reduced prices of land, which, taking the whole country over, are certainly 15 per cent., perhaps 20 per cent., below what they were ten years ago—I say, considering the reduction in the prices of land, I am inclined to think that the British investor is a little needlessly timid in coming forward. I speak as a land-owner myself, and I speak in the interests of land-owners, when I say I heartily wish to see new buyers coming into the market and filling up those gaps and voids which will always, from time to time, occur among the older possessors of the soil. It is for the interest of the country that the accumulated wealth should be poured out upon the land rather than that it should be squandered on a needy and greedy foreign State, or invested in speculative undertakings, of which one-half are swindles. Looking at it in the interest of the buyer, he may get $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for his money if he buys his estate with common skill and judgment, and, as many of my friends know, it is not quite certain, if he continues to prosper, and money continues to be plentiful, that twenty or twenty-five years hence the Funds will give him more.

¹ The Settled Land Act, 1882.

I will not go into the old-disputed question of what are called peasant proprietors. I have often said, and I repeat now, that if any considerable number of persons wish to try the experiment, they need not wait for Parliament to help them. It is not a difficult thing to form a company to buy an estate and to break it up into small lots. Whether that will be a successful experiment nothing except actual trial can show. But, while a good many people are fond of speaking and writing on the subject, I do not see that anybody is willing to put his hand into his pocket and try what can be done with very little trouble. To be sure that cannot be done without some risk, and talk costs nothing. If people really mean what they say about wishing the poor man to be able to invest his savings in the soil, I answer that they can bring that result about whenever they please. The objection often taken is that the cost and trouble of making out a title are practically prohibitory. That may apply to the small buyer, but it does not apply to a company which can make its title once for all and buy land in large blocks and then divide; and until I see people inclined to utilise the means which they have, I shall take the liberty of thinking that the supposed demand for very small estates—peasant proprietary—is rather speculative than real, is founded upon a notion of what people ought to want rather than upon any observation and experience of what they really do want.

Now, if I am not wearying you too much, I should like to say one word about that other subject of complaint to which I have referred—the want of adequate protection for tenants' improvements. I have always held that to be a real grievance, even though the cases of actual hardship may be few and far between. Parliament has now dealt with it,¹ and though I do not wish to refer here to any controversial topic, I think I may affirm that the Legislature has, on the whole, succeeded in doing that which it meant and tried to do, namely, to make as fair a compromise as the nature of the case admits between the claims of the owner and those of the occupier. I know

¹ See the Agricultural Holdings Act. 1883.

there are some persons who fear that litigation will be encouraged, and that ill feeling will be created between landlord and tenant. I am not afraid of that if there are good sense and moderation on both sides; and if, on either side or on both sides, those qualities should unhappily be wanting, then I say of two evils it is the lesser one that litigation should take place than that a wrong should be suffered to which the law should give no redress. But in truth landlord and tenant are so dependent on each other that they can help one another to such a degree if they choose, or make things so unpleasant to one another if they quarrel, that, given the most ordinary amount of good sense and good feeling, I think there will be little doubt that, as a general rule, they will pull together.

Now, objection is taken from the other side. There are some people—I do not think a great many—who would have Parliament go much further, and adopt something like the Irish system, which virtually makes the tenant owner of the soil, with only a fixed payment due to the landlord. I do not think that would do for England, and I will tell you why. I do not put my objection on the ground of the landlord's rights. Land-owners are a comparatively small body, and, unhappily, in the best of all possible worlds, abstract rights do not go for much when there is no voting power behind them. But here, at least, all permanent improvements are made by the landlord, and notoriously upon most large estates a very considerable portion of the rent goes back in that way to the soil. Now, once put the owner in such a position that he can derive no advantage from the improvement of his estate, and of course he will spend no money upon it. Why should he? It has become practically his tenant's and not his own. But the effect of that would be to transfer the opportunity and the duty of developing the resources of the soil from a class which is generally well off, and both able and willing to do it, to a class which has, as a rule, no superfluous means beyond what it requires for its own business. If farmers as a body were to ask for fixity of tenure, I believe, for my own part, that they would get it, because no power could restrain them, but

they would not get the landlord's money spent on their farms in addition ; and comparing what they would gain with what they would lose, I think they would make a very bad bargain.

What will be the effect of this change in the law which we have made ? Not much, I think, directly, except the prevention of certain rare, but always possible, cases of injustice. It will do something ; it will, I think, discourage mere speculative and reckless expenditure on experimental farming ; for if the land-owner knows or believes that his tenant will, in the end, send in a bill to him, he will object to outlay which he does not think likely to pay. Formerly, the loss would have been all the tenant's ; now it is possible, under the plan of valuation, for the landlord to bear his share of it, and he will be cautious accordingly. In the same way and for the same reason, I think the new arrangement will favour the moderate-sized farmer as against the very large farmer. The owner, who may, at the expiration of a tenancy, have a long bill sent in to him, will naturally prefer to lessen the risk of an inconveniently heavy payment as far as he can, and the best way of doing that will be to see that no single tenant holds more than a certain amount of land. All his tenants are not likely to leave him at once, and he will not have a very heavy demand from any one of them. I believe also that in many cases it will have the effect of inducing tenants of their own choice to revert to the system of yearly agreements instead of leases for long terms.

Farmers are not always willing, in the uncertainty of the seasons, to bind themselves for a term of years. Their chief inducement to do so has hitherto been their natural and just desire to obtain security for what they laid out in land ; and now that they have got that security, in another shape, I think it is probable that they may generally prefer freedom to withdraw themselves and their capital from the land whenever they wish. But if that is to be the result it would be solely of their own choice. I do not suppose there are many land-owners now in any part of England who will be so insane

as to lose a good tenant rather than grant him a lease. Of course, a good deal will depend upon the spirit in which the Act is worked. I believe that both classes concerned will join in trying to make it work smoothly. It is very much their interest to do so; and if they do, I hope that no further legislation dealing with their respective claims may be necessary for a long time to come. Legislative interference in such matters is sometimes, in my belief, necessary, but it is always an evil if it can possibly be avoided. It is, like medicine, necessary to cure a complaint if you have got one, but, like medicine, it is a thing which in a healthy state of the body you can well do without. Forgive me for having inflicted this long sermon upon you. I thought you would not be satisfied if I did not say something about the recent changes that have taken place affecting the condition of the farmer.

LX

THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

MEETING TO CELEBRATE THE JUBILEE OF THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE
BRITISH COLONIES, LONDON : AUGUST 1, 1884

I HAVE been asked to come here in a double capacity—partly as the Minister¹ who for the time being represents that department which was most immediately concerned in the construction and working of the Emancipation Act, and partly as the son of the Minister to whose lot it fell, fifty years ago, to pass through Parliament that great historical measure. Many people may ask—I was myself at first inclined to ask—why, with so many questions waiting for solution which concerned the present and the future, go back upon the past, and indulge in singing songs of triumph over a victory won fifty years ago? But I think the answer is plain, when we consider that slavery in some shape has prevailed in every organised society of antiquity, and was, indeed, the basis of ancient European civilisation. The date of its disappearance from the civilised world—for it practically received its death-blow in 1834—is an historical landmark, interesting, not merely to philanthropists, but to all thoughtful students of the evolution of society. It would be an interesting question, but hardly suitable for this time and place, for anyone to examine the moral and intellectual causes which brought about that remarkable change. Much, I think, was due to the great humanitarian and popular movement which pervaded all Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century, something to the increase of popular power, something to the excess to which the slave system had

¹ Lord Derby was at this time Secretary of State for the Colonies in Mr. Gladstone's second administration.

been developed—for it is more easy to understand and to excuse purely domestic slavery, where some human relations exist between master and slave, than that which takes the form of vast gangs owned and worked for profit by a master who does not even know his slaves by sight; something also to an economical cause—the growing perception of the fact that compulsion cannot produce intelligent labour, and that, in the complicated industrial operations of modern life, intelligence is more necessary than mere brute force. At any rate, to whatever extent that cause may have operated, the lesson has been learnt. We have seen that no slave-driver's whip can develop industry as it is developed among freemen, by the fear of want on the one hand, and the prospect of fortune on the other. We have seen, too, that not only are the workers better off under freedom, but that employers of free labour can make their business more profitable than ever slave-owners were able to do. The Slave States of America were never rich as a class. The great capitalists of America all come from the North. In the case of the negro, I do not believe that any expectations have been disappointed except such as were pitched unreasonably high.

Perhaps we appreciate more justly the influence of heredity than men did half a century ago. When we consider that the negro population of our Colonies had been slaves for a generation or two, and absolute savages before they were made slaves, the wonder to my mind is not that they should come short of a European standard of civilisation, as no doubt they do, but that they should have done as well for themselves as on the whole they have. In Barbados they work as steadily as English labourers. In Jamaica there is a very large exodus of negroes who go freely to the hard labour and unhealthy climate of the Panama Canal, tempted by the high rate of wages offered. In some islands, I admit, their condition is somewhat torpid and stagnant; but at the worst they are quiet, unaggressive, and only ask to be allowed to lead their own life in their own way. I certainly do not expect that the West Indies will ever be what Australia and Canada

are ; but I see no reason why they should not enjoy a very fair measure of prosperity, and be happy in a quieter fashion. And it ought not to be forgotten that where the West Indian negro is not industrious the cause is not merely his position of freedom, but the combination of very few wants with unlimited land on which to squat. But, after all, the question what may be the future of the negro race is one with which we are only indirectly concerned. What does concern us is that we should do our duty by them. Let them have freedom, let them have a fair chance, let them be fairly matched in the race of life ; and whether they win or lose, our responsibility is covered. We are not answerable for their doing well ; we are answerable for putting no obstacles in their way to prevent their doing well.

I have spoken of the English Act of 1834 as having practically given the death-blow to slavery throughout the world. I do not think that is saying too much, for we know the force of public opinion. All of us leave a good part of our consciences in our neighbours' keeping—when one country condemns an institution, and makes great sacrifices to get rid of it, others are pretty sure to follow suit ; and in the case of that emancipation on a far greater scale carried through under less happy auspices by the United States, I think it is indisputable that one at least of the principal operating causes on the American mind, one of the main supports of the emancipationist movement in its earlier stages, was the dislike to seem to lag behind England in a question of political progress. There is only one thing more that I wish to say about the legislation of 1834. It was essentially honest legislation. There were many persons who thought that the planters—the owners of slaves—ought to bear the whole loss that followed on their slaves being set free. I am not surprised that that view was taken. There is, and always was, plenty of cheap philanthropy. And no doubt it is a tempting thing to relieve your neighbour in distress at somebody else's cost, and not out of your own pocket. But the Government and Parliament of that day

did not see it so. They recognised the fact that the Legislature which had permitted and sanctioned slavery was just as much responsible for its existence as the individuals who happened to own slaves, and they paid honestly for the rights which they swept away. I believe that that act of justice was an act of policy also. It showed all the world that we were in earnest in the matter ; it disarmed local opposition, which would otherwise have been naturally very bitter ; and it gave to the legislation of 1834 a character which it would not otherwise have had—a character of national self-sacrifice and of generosity, as well as of justice.

Now, as to the resolution which I am to move, I need not spend many words upon it. It comes to this—that the slave trade, which we are making so many efforts to put down, never will be put down thoroughly while slavery exists. I accept that doctrine. I believe it is the truth. Smuggling never has been checked until low tariffs made it not worth while to smuggle. And we must recollect that the slave trade is no imported or foreign calamity in Africa. It is a native of the soil. It has existed as far back as we can trace anything African. Our sable brother has been in the habit of catching and selling his brothers whenever and wherever he got a chance, and he will go on doing it so long as he can find a market. No doubt we have checked the slave trade on some routes and in some districts ; but against that gain we must set the enormous increase of suffering which follows when slaves are driven in haste, and through desert and unfrequented districts, in order to escape capture. I am quite sure that until slavery dies out in Asia, and at least in the partially civilised parts of Africa, as it has in Europe, you will never thoroughly get rid of the slave trade. How that is to be done—when it can be done, through what agencies, and in what countries first—is not a question which can be settled by an offhand sentence at a public meeting. But that it ought to be done—that it can be done, and that in time it will be done—are matters about which I entertain no doubt.

LXI

CONSTITUENCIES AND MEMBERS — TORY DEMOCRATS—THE IRISH PARTY—LOCAL DEBTS—THE LAND QUESTION—REGISTRATION—PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE — CHURCH AND STATE — FOREIGN POLICY—IRELAND

BLACKBURN : OCTOBER 10, 1885

I most sincerely thank you for the great cordiality of this reception, and I thank you still more for the language of high and well-deserved panegyric with which the previous speakers have referred to the leaders of the Liberal party. Mr. Gladstone has come forward at an age when all men naturally desire rest. He has come forward for the purpose of supplying that union to the Liberal party which is the one thing we need ; and when a man does that, who has been twice Prime Minister, who has held the first office in the State for more than ten years, and who has gone through more than fifty years of unequalled labour in the public service, I say that his appearance on the stage of public life is absolutely free from any suspicion of a desire to gratify private ambition, and it is an example of self-devotion and of a sacrifice of personal feeling to public duty, which not his own followers alone, but the country at large, will know how to admire and appreciate. I do not want to disappoint you, but I am not going to say a word to you about the coming general election.¹ It is not my place. Peers are non-electors, and though other non-electors—a lunatic, a pauper, a lad under age—may

¹ On June 9 the Government was defeated in the House of Commons, and Mr. Gladstone resigned office; he was succeeded by Lord Salisbury, and the general election took place in November.

interest themselves in election matters if they choose, that is a privilege not extended to members of the House of Lords. I accept the disqualification, but I am reminded of what a lady said in the time of the great French Revolution when she was told that women ought not to interfere in politics. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘that may be very well, but when a woman is going to have her head cut off it is natural she should ask why.’ And it is equally natural that we who are citizens, whether peers or not, who have some stake in the country, should wish to know on what system we are to be administered and taxed and legislated for during the next five or six years. I think, therefore, you will not take it amiss if I venture to trouble you for a few minutes on the great question in which we are all interested—what principles shall be those of the next Parliament, what programme of legislation the two Houses are to have before them in the years immediately coming.

There is one thing which, with your leave, I will not do. I will not enter into any discussion of the personal ability or fitness of this or that public man to hold power. I keep clear of that subject, partly because it is invidious, partly because it is commonplace, partly because it is, to my mind, of secondary importance. You, the electors, are the masters. You are to decide what is to be done. When that is settled, the men to do it will always be found. You must leave them some freedom of action, else administration cannot go on ; but you must tell them plainly what you want, and not only that, but you must see that it is done. A country is not self-governed because once in six years it chooses the individuals who are to legislate for it. It can only have real self-government if in every county, in every borough, in every constituency there is kept up a constant watchfulness, a constant interest in what is being done in Parliament which will make the 600 gentlemen at Westminster feel that they are legislating under the eyes of those who sent them there. I am not afraid, for one, that such a system will produce any undue dependence or servility among public men. The public does not want slaves ; it values frank speech and

manly spirit, and it will bear dissent, and even contradiction courteously and respectfully expressed : but it will not bear, and it ought not to bear, indifference or neglect of duty. It ought to discourage talk which wastes time, and obstruction however plausibly excused ; and if in these matters you want your servants to do their duty, there is only one way—look after them sharply, and give them your mind plainly if they chatter when they ought to be at work. I repeat, the immediate question before us, and before all England, is, what are to be the principles on which this new Parliament is to act ? The choice is very limited. There are only two practically possible lines of policy open. A really and purely Conservative policy—a system of keeping things as they are—is not now on the cards. Lord Salisbury's late speech is proof enough of that. There is a restlessness, a passion for reform, a desire that the new world shall be different from the old, which no section of politicians can resist. The party now in power see it as clearly as we do. Therefore, a new name had to be invented, and, as they cannot very well call themselves Liberals, they have hit upon the phrase Tory Democrats. It is a capital one, for, being perfectly unintelligible, it does not pledge anybody to anything.

What a Conservative is we know, but to describe a Tory is difficult, and when you add the Democrat, why, the name is a most convenient one under which to rally all those people who feel that concessions to Liberalism are inevitable, but who do not like to own themselves beaten. But, giving up the name as a hopeless puzzle, what do the Tory Democrats intend to do ? I do not exactly know, and I do not think they know themselves ; but I think I can guess pretty accurately what will be the lines on which they are likely to travel. They require to impress the popular imagination ; to distract the public mind from questions of internal policy ; and the surest way of doing so is to engage in a dashing, adventurous, hazardous, and costly system of foreign policy. Spend freely, swagger a good deal, go as near to a quarrel with some foreign State as you can without actual war ; and for the moment all

the world will look that way, and local government and reform of taxation and Church Establishments and parochial disputes of that sort will be forgotten for the moment. It is an old dodge. It will answer as long as there are fools in the world, and even with a reformed Parliament we may, perhaps, have a few left. But, of course, internal affairs cannot be entirely neglected ; and what is to be done with them ? Well, if large reforms are to be made, and if all existing interests are to be very tenderly dealt with, there is only one way—spend fast and freely, and you will make everybody happy all round for the moment. Of course you must borrow, and posterity must pay ; but posterity has no vote, and the future can take care of itself. Mind, I am not saying—it would be unjust to say—that these things or things like them will be done ; I only affirm that the temptation to do them is strong, that a reckless foreign policy and a spendthrift home policy are the natural expedients of what is called a Tory Democrat when he is run close by his opponents. But there is another consideration. What will a Cabinet, supposing it influenced by such ideas as I have been speaking about, do about Ireland ? For, do not let us delude ourselves, Ireland is the great difficulty now, just as Sir Robert Peel said it was his forty-five years ago.

You have seen the speeches lately made by Mr. Parnell. He tells you that, whoever else wins or loses, the Irish National party are bound to win at the next election. They will hold aloof from both parties and try to make their own terms. Now, I do not impute to our present administrators that they will be guilty of the great iniquity of bartering away the English hold on Ireland for the sake of Irish support, but I say the temptation is strong. They will be pressed to yield this, that, and the other, and in each case they will be told that the concession will not make things much worse than they are already. The bribe is a high one. Will they—will any of us—have the courage to resist it ? Eighty votes—and it is likely that the Irish party will not number less--are a great power when parties are divided. If I were an elector, that is a consideration which I should think more important

than almost any other. It is never good to have parties closely balanced. In the present state of things a small majority either way would be nothing less than a disaster. I do not suppose our Conservative friends in their most sanguine moods expect a large majority: and we are, therefore, in this position—either we must have such a majority as may make us independent of the Irish vote, or Mr. Parnell must be the virtual ruler of this country.¹ Now, there may be differences of opinion as to the propriety of Mr. Parnell having power in Ireland: but nobody on this side the water, Whig or Tory, Radical or Conservative, wishes him to be master of England. Why do I dwell on this? Because it leads to a very plain conclusion. If you do not want to have Mr. Parnell and his friends for your masters, you must return a majority that shall make one party independent of him. That party can in the nature of this case only be the Liberal party. The Liberal party can only win by cordial union among all its sections. Moderate men, Whigs—it is an historic name, and not a name to be ashamed of—must not let themselves be scared by a few utterances which may not be altogether prudent or just towards them, and our enthusiastic friends with socialist leanings must recollect that they are not the whole world; that they are not, in all probability, a majority of their own party, and that if they go for all or nothing they may quite possibly get nothing for their pains. I cannot see, for my part, why it should be necessary to anticipate what is probably a distant future. We have work enough before us on which we are all agreed—I speak of the Liberal party as a whole—to give occupation to Parliament for the next five years; and I do not think there is any reason for holding back or for refusing to join in that work because we may possibly hereafter differ about something which is not now urgent, and which, in any case, had better wait until it has been more thoroughly argued out.

The question of local government is one of the first to be

¹ The result of the general election was to give the Liberals a majority over the Conservatives, but not over both the Conservatives and the Irish party.

dealt with, but it is one as to which, in principle, there is no difference among Liberals of any shade. We all agree that the administration of county affairs must be put into the hands of an elective board. The only differences among us, if they exist, are on a point of detail. For my own part, I should not shrink from giving very large powers to these local Parliaments, subject only to one restriction—I hold it absolutely necessary that some check should be put upon their powers to mortgage the future. The ratepayers may be trusted to control extravagant expenditure if it falls at once on the rates, but the temptation is strong to secure some immediate advantage at the cost of future generations. I am not the only person who sees, and has long seen, with uneasiness the growth of indebtedness in our large towns; and though prudence is not generally a very popular virtue with democracies, yet this is a case where the instincts and sympathies of democracy are or ought to be on the side of prudence. For capital always tends to get into few hands, and if our local debts grow, as they very possibly may, to be counted by hundreds of millions, we shall have done much to create a new plutocracy, which will not be popular in its tendencies or ideas. Most people think it a misfortune that the State should have to pay in perpetuity more than 22,000,000*l.* a year to fundholders who have absolutely no duties to perform in return for what they receive. The late Government did what they could to provide for the gradual reduction of the National Debt. I wish we could have done more, but at least it was a beginning. But all our work will be undone, the dangers which we are trying to lessen will be immeasurably increased, if, side by side with the old National Debt, there grows up a new Municipal Debt of perhaps equal amount. Depend upon it this is a very serious question. The growth of Socialism throughout Europe has followed very closely on the gigantic increase of national indebtedness during the present century, and men who begin to feel the pressure intolerable are apt to raise questions, more easily stated than solved, as to the right of any State to impose burdens in

perpetuity for the benefit of one generation. I do not go into details here, but I hold that, as a general principle, you should insist on every local body which contracts a debt providing for the repayment of that debt within fifty or sixty years at the latest.

To turn to another subject of domestic legislation, everybody is agreed that one of the first questions that will have to be dealt with by the new Parliament is the law, or rather the set of laws, concerning land. I will tell you my views on that question in as few words as I can. I believe that the public will require that all laws which have for their object or effect to impede the sale of land shall be removed. They are not now as stringent or as effective as it is common to suppose; but while they exist there will always be at least a plausible grievance, and any mischief which they may really do will be magnified tenfold in the popular imagination. I think that land-owners will be well advised if they encourage the multiplication of small proprietors; and, so far as it is possible to cheapen and simplify the transfer of land—it is not so easy as many think—I am in favour of that also. I think, when times are a little better for sellers than they are now, it will be a good thing to put into the market gradually, and not in such a way as to sacrifice their value, lands belonging to charities, ecclesiastical bodies, and other public trusts, making exceptions in cases where the holding of them is necessary for the purposes of the trust. A public company or institution is, in the nature of the case, generally a non-resident proprietor, an absentee proprietor, and is restrained by the conditions of its ownership from doing many things which are reasonably expected from a private owner. If such estates were sold in small lots, farm by farm, men of comparatively small means would have ample opportunities of buying. As to the plan, which has been so much talked of lately, of enabling local authorities to buy land by compulsion in order to sell it again to labourers in small holdings, I am not absolutely hostile, but I am sceptical. It has never been thoroughly examined or discussed; it has never

even been debated in Parliament. We have not heard the objections that could be taken to it, nor the answers to those objections, and till we have I should be sorry either to condemn it or to sanction it in an unqualified manner. It is nonsense, however, to talk of it, as some people do, as confiscation. We are all accustomed to see land taken by compulsion for public purposes. There is nothing new in that, and to speak of it as a vast machinery of corruption intended to enable local authorities to reward their supporters seems to be an absolutely unfounded and unreasonable charge. But what strikes me most strongly in connection with it is that it proposes to throw on the ratepayers what may probably be a very heavy burden for the benefit of one class. It must be a losing operation, for, of course, I assume that the price paid is to be a fair one, and I can hardly see the farmer, the shopkeeper, the clerk, and the artisan submitting to a large increase in their rates for the sake of supporting a new class of cultivators who are to be created at their expense. I think they would be apt to ask, 'If one set of men are to be helped out of the rates to set up in business, why not another?' Why is the man who wants to stock a shop not as well entitled to public assistance as he who wants to set up a farm? Either a thing will pay or it will not pay. If it will, why should not private enterprise carry it through? If it will not, the question will, I think, be asked, whether the general public ought to be taxed to do it. At the same time I am not saying that the experiment should not be tried. There is nothing like practice to test theory. But, if it is tried, it should be at first on a small scale, and with all reasonable precautions against jobbery or abuse; and I think also that powers of compulsory purchase need not, in the first instance, be taken until or unless it has been ascertained that purchase in the ordinary way will not meet the requirements of the buyers. Landlords in these days are willing enough to sell; the difficulty is to find buyers; and to my mind the trouble is not to bring peasant proprietors on to the soil, but to keep them there. If they are free to sell again, a

good many of them will disappear after a bad year or two. If they are not free to sell, you are creating a new set of restrictions in place of those which you propose to sweep away, and you are tying up the land more tightly than before. That, however, is a matter for the future. I believe that the next few years will see an immense increase in the number of land-owners, partly in consequence of the removal of legal restrictions on sale, partly because existing owners are more sensible than they were a few years ago of the danger of heavy encumbrances at a time when taxation is likely to be increased, and partly also because the fall in rents has lessened the feeling of security in regard to land which used to make people think it the safest of all investments. That movement I think the law should favour and stimulate, and I doubt whether, for the present at least, it need do much more.

I am not in favour of the Irish system of what is called the three F's, and I will tell you why. I think it would operate seriously to check the progress of the reform which we have been speaking of; it would introduce a double ownership, whereas all land reformers ever since I can remember have been crying out for single ownership; and it would check the sale of land, which is exactly what we want to promote; and, more than all, it would put an end to improvements of a costly and durable character. For, in this country, such improvements are made by the owner, and not by the occupier. The tenant has not, as a rule, the capital which is required, and of course the landlord will not make them if the rent is fixed by law, because he has then no inducement to improve. The profits would go into another man's pocket. It is important also to notice that the system of fixed rents and free sale is a benefit to the tenant only in the first instance. He is to be free to sell his interest, and, of course, when he sells he will take care to get full market value for it; and the man who buys of him will be paying a competition price for his farm under the new arrangement, just as, under the old arrangement, he might have been pay-

ing a competition rent. I am not pleading in favour of the land-owners. I know that they are a numerically small body, not very popular, and just now half ruined ; and under those circumstances the less people talk about their rights the better. But what I am afraid of is lest in our eagerness to improve the condition of the cultivator we adopt remedies which are incompatible with one another, which will neutralise one another, and which will leave us in a worse position than they found us in. There are so many people now on public platforms and elsewhere anxious to have a share in demolishing the squires that if they do not take care they will be breaking each other's heads with their random blows.

There is only one other aspect of the land question which I will ask you to look at, and that is the question of enfranchising leaseholds in towns. Let me say at once that, as a rather large holder of that kind of property, I have not the slightest objection to that proposal on grounds of self-interest. Ground-rents are merely investments, and there is no special hardship in having to change them for some other investment on fair terms. But there is one consideration which I have not seen referred to, and which concerns the tenant. If anyone letting a house for more than twenty years is to be under the obligation of selling it to the tenant, if required, will not that tend quite as much to shorten leases as to create freeholds ? If that is the consequence, the builder who has redeemed his ground-rent may get an advantage, but the occupier will be worse off than before. I am not saying that objection is fatal ; I dare say it could be got over ; but I should like to have the whole question gone into thoroughly by a Commission or Committee, so that we may not run into mistakes which it may not be easy to set right. The system of leasing for a short term is undoubtedly a bad one ; and if, as they say is the case in the south, the tendency is to shorten the term, it may be quite fair to check that tendency by law. When, as is the case over much of this county, the lease is for 999 years, the tenant has virtually a freehold, or what is equivalent to a freehold, already, and I do not see that any

change is required. Let me just add, before passing from this subject, that, in the interest of the public, whatever the State means to do about land it ought to do quickly. Everybody loses by uncertainty and suspense. No man will spend money on his estate if he is not sure of being allowed to keep it, or if the conditions of his ownership are likely to be altered from year to year. The value of land in Great Britain is probably not much under 2,000,000,000*l.*, and the reduction of one-third in that value means a loss to the community nearly equal to the doubling of the National Debt.

There are also three other subjects which are ripe for immediate solution—local government, Parliamentary procedure, and registration. As to the last I have nothing to say, except that I cannot conceive that the Conservative party, who had the good sense to recede from an untenable position, where the suffrage and distribution of seats were concerned, will attempt to take back what they have agreed to give by putting unnecessary obstacles in the way of electors claiming their votes. It would be foolish—it would be even suicidal—for they would probably shut out as many friends as enemies, and they would alienate the poorer electors in general without any advantage for themselves. I hope, therefore, that is a subject which we may see dealt with in a practical spirit, and not in one merely of partisanship.

The question of procedure is far more difficult and complicated, because it raises the very awkward query of how far a minority, which may be a very large and powerful as well as a very small minority, shall be allowed to retard the passing of measures which it dislikes by full and detailed discussion. You cannot settle that by any cut-and-dry rule. You can only give to the House large powers of cutting short needless talk, and trust to the good sense and moderation of an English Parliament to prevent them from being abused. A great deal may be done by the appointment of grand committees to expedite legislation in detail; but, in the case of important measures which excite strong feeling, that is an expedient which will not help us much. For the House of

Commons, as a whole, will not be content that such measures should be discussed only in committee ; they will insist upon debating them over again. On the whole, while I accept the principle of giving very large powers to the Speaker, I believe that the most powerful check on obstruction will be found outside the walls of Parliament. The most reckless obstructors will not dare to play tricks if they are met by a strong expression of opinion on the part of the constituencies. Let the nation put its foot down and say, ‘ We will have no more of this,’ and there will be an end of it ; any other remedy, to my mind, is only a palliative. But one thing you must do : you and we—for we are all outsiders so far as the House of Commons is concerned—do not encourage the practice which has grown up of late years of expecting every Government to bring in three times as many bills as it can possibly carry. That leads to more waste of time than anything ; measures are brought in, read a second time, discussed at great length, and then, for want of time, they are dropped just when the heaviest part of the work upon them was finished, and all has to be done over again. That is a good deal your fault—I mean the fault of the public of the constituencies. You like large promises, and you take your chance of their not being kept. Ask for less, and see that what is promised is really done, and we shall get on faster.

There are in the background, as we know, far larger questions than any of those which I have touched. One of them affects the relations which should exist between Church and State. I have long held, and am ready to avow it openly, that I do not believe that an Established Church—that is, the exclusive alliance of one religious denomination among many with the State—can be in the long run permanently maintained alongside of a system of really popular representation such as we have got now. Disestablishment, and at least partial disendowment, must, in my mind, ultimately come ; and if I were a parson, or one of those laymen who identify themselves especially with ecclesiastical interests and ideas, I should look rather to making the best terms possible while

there is time than to resisting what is inevitable. But we are hardly ripe in England for that change. It is a very big one, and if we take it up now you may be quite sure that no other reform—and we have a good many on hand—could possibly get itself attended to. I think, therefore, that the decision which has been come to, to let the subject stand over for the moment, is a wise one. But if the representatives of Scotland desire the disestablishment of their Church, it is not for Englishmen to oppose them; and, for myself, though I can speak for no one else, I consider that Wales has a strong claim to be separately dealt with. In Wales, as was the case in Ireland, Nonconformists form the bulk of the population. The Welsh people constitute in many respects a distinct nationality, and I do not see why we should refuse to Welsh loyalty what we have granted to Irish sedition.

Our foreign policy I will deal with as briefly as possible. We are not in the happy position of the United States, who can afford to have no foreign policy. We cannot absolutely seclude ourselves from the affairs of Europe, but I am quite sure that the less we are mixed up in the sanguinary muddle of Continental diplomacy the better for England. We need no special alliances. We have nothing to gain by being mixed up with the intrigues of despotic or semi-despotic Powers. I know too little of what is passing in Bulgaria to express an opinion upon it beyond this, that the statesman would be insane who should drag England into war in such a quarrel, and I feel confident that the party now in power, however much they may dislike the upsetting of the Berlin Treaty, will not do anything so suicidal. As to Egypt, it may have been, it probably was, inevitable that we should interfere as we did in 1882—I cannot speak confidently on that because I was not a member of the Government—but it is not the less unlucky on that account; and I think we ought to look out and see that we do not on any pretext, however plausible, get that Egyptian millstone tied permanently round our necks. We hold already an enormous proportion of the earth's surface. Great military Empires are apt to be like soap

bubbles. Just when they have reached their greatest expansion they burst up ; and I believe that by spreading ourselves further, by increasing the already unwieldy bulk of the Empire, we are not only augmenting responsibilities almost too heavy to be borne, but accelerating the inevitable to all nations, though, as we hope, the distant for us, period of national decline and decay.

I have detained you too long, but let me for one moment refer to what is now the most difficult and dangerous piece of work before us. What are we to do about Ireland ? I do not think that even now the gravity of the situation is fully understood. It is useless to deny that a dislike of the English connection is the almost universal feeling of the country, with the exception of Ulster. We have granted religious equality, we have given the occupier the control of the land, we offer the people at large self-government of the same kind that we are ready to introduce in England and Scotland, but it is idle to deceive ourselves with the notion that these things have satisfied, or are likely to satisfy, the Irish people as a body. The anti-English feeling is probably at this moment stronger than it has ever been before. The demand is for an independent Irish Parliament, free even to exclude English goods by protective duties. And even if at first the Nationalist party would consent to some restrictions on its authority, those restrictions would undoubtedly serve as a basis for fresh agitation, unless total legislative independence were obtained. Now, I am afraid that while that is the Irish temper it is hopeless to suppose that we can rely on conciliation alone. Let us do for Ireland whatever is just and kind, but let us do it for the satisfaction of our own consciences, not in the hope of a return which we shall not get. On the question of maintaining the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament justice is on our side. Three millions have no right in such a matter to dictate to 33 millions, and, if we stand firm, I am not afraid of the result. I say that for the benefit of those who look at the matter in a national and patriotic point of view. To the mere wire-

pullers on the one side or the other—a useful class, I do not disparage them—I should hold a different language ; I should tell them to be careful lest in running after the Irish vote they lose the vote of England and Scotland. We cannot play with this question. It is too grave ; it is too dangerous ; and if we wish to make concessions of all that can reasonably be asked by reasonable Irishmen—and that I am as willing as any man to do—we must lay down unmistakably at the same time that there are principles that cannot be tampered with—the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, the maintenance of the Imperial rule, and the rights of loyal English citizens whom we have for generations past encouraged to settle in Ireland, and whom we cannot abandon to enemies who hate them on account of their connection with us.

I thank you for the patience with which you have listened to what I am afraid has been rather a dry statement of opinion. I have tried to address myself to the question, not of how we should win—of that I have no doubt—but of the use which we should make of the victory when it is gained. That, after all, is the chief matter. Union, moderation, and energy are what we need ; we shall find them, I am well convinced, among the Liberals of Lancashire, and it is an old saying that where Lancashire leads, England before long will follow.

LXII

HOME RULE—POSITION OF THE LIBERAL UNIONISTS—THE COERCION FALLACY—IRELAND NOT ILL USED—HOME RULE AND IRISH NATIONALITY—HOME RULE NOT FINAL—THE LAND QUESTION—ULSTER

LIVERPOOL: JUNE 29, 1886

We are engaged just now on a new constitutional experiment. The present dissolution of Parliament is not one of an ordinary character. It is not a contest of parties as formerly; it is rather what the French call a *plébiscite*—a popular vote of the whole electoral body taken on a single question. And for my own part I do not regret it, because I hold that such a question as that now before us ought not to be decided by any authority inferior to that of the nation itself. For myself, I have come here as a matter of duty rather than of pleasure. We are in the midst of a crisis, the greatest and most dangerous, in my judgment, that the present generation has witnessed, and which to us Liberals is attended with this peculiar unhappiness, that, in whatever way it may end, it must necessarily cause for a time, at least, the disruption of the Liberal party. So long as it seemed possible that the breach might be repaired, I have abstained from saying or doing anything that could make it wider. But the mischief is now done. We, political friends and former comrades, find ourselves ranged on different sides, and at this moment, for any one who has a sense of political responsibility to remain neutral or to speak in hesitating terms is to show not prudence or caution, but simply cowardice.

We are met in this room to protest against a disruption

of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland. We do so because we are Liberals—because we believe the Union of the two countries to have been a right and wise step in the direction of progress, and the repeal of that Union to be an essentially retrograde measure. And let me add this: we Liberal Unionists deny that we are seceders establishing a little private sect of our own. It would ill become me to utter a word in disparagement of the great and remarkable man whom we are compelled to oppose. Mr. Gladstone's name is a part of English history. Contemporary censure cannot injure, as contemporary panegyric cannot raise him. But we have been accustomed to think of Mr. Bright also as a Liberal authority; we have been accustomed to respect the sound judgment and honest purpose of Lord Hartington; we see in Mr. Goschen one of the first financial authorities of our time; and in Mr. Chamberlain the able, the energetic, the eloquent leader of the newer school of Radicals. When we see these men, and others like them, at no slight sacrifice of personal feeling, and in some cases of personal prospects, come forward against the chief whom they have faithfully served, and the majority of the party on which they rely, and when they do this, not as striking out a new policy, but as maintaining that policy which until of late was undisputed, we are entitled to assert that Liberal Unionism is no crotchet, that it is no defection from established and recognised party ties, no result of personal jealousies, such as often break up political parties, but the necessary consequence of a new and, as I hold, a most ill-judged departure, taken in haste and repudiated by a Liberal Parliament. We are sometimes told that all foreign, all Continental opinion is against us. I very much doubt that as a matter of fact; and, if it were a fact, I should still like to know on what knowledge of the subject an opinion of that kind was founded. I will not easily believe that the Liberals of France, of Germany, of Italy, or of Spain, who know the part which clericalism has played in their countries, can desire to see a measure adopted which, whatever other results it may have, will give over Ireland, as regards its

internal affairs, to the absolute control of the peasantry, who are themselves under the absolute control of an Ultramontane priesthood. If they expect anything which has ever been known or thought of as a Liberal policy to result from that process, they must ignore the teaching of their own observation and experience at home.

Then, again, we are told, and it is repeated in every variety of phrase, 'You have only two alternatives before you : Home Rule or coercion.' Now, I believe a more transparent fallacy than that was never uttered. What is meant by coercion ? Does it mean that men who break the law should be coerced to keep it ? Why, coercion in that sense is only another name for civilisation, and the very people who cry out against the mere notion of compelling one part of Ireland to accept a system which it dislikes would be the very first to call for a forcible repression of the Protestant minority of Ulster if that minority showed a disposition to resist. But when we are told that under no circumstances can a policy of coercion—if I am to use what is really a nickname—be justified, does not that prove too much ? The argument, if it means anything, means that England is not to put a veto upon any demands which the majority of the Irish people may put forward. How if they asked for separation ; how if they signified their wish of independence ? You cannot concede it, and this our English Home Rulers admit. But if the Irish persist, and you refuse, what do you come to but that hateful necessity, as I allow it to be, of using force at last ? In truth, if the Irish are to be the sole judges of what they want, and are to have it simply because they want it, there is nothing for us to discuss here. We have only got to let them choose for themselves and accept what they suggest. But if we repudiate that notion as absurd—as, I suppose, all of us do—we admit that England and Scotland must in the last resort determine what they will surrender and what they will retain, and must enforce their decision if necessary. And let me say in passing that our right to do so is not a right founded upon force alone. It is founded upon that which is the basis of all

popular and democratic legislation—the will of the majority. The relations between England and Ireland do not concern Ireland alone—they affect us deeply and in a hundred ways. And the question what these relations are henceforward to be is to be settled, not by five millions on one side of the Channel only, still less by the three millions which constitute the local majority, but by the thirty-six millions on both sides of the Channel.

Closely connected with what I will call the coercion fallacy is another very like it—the specious, the plausible plea—‘Cannot you trust Irishmen to manage their own affairs?’ Their own affairs? Yes. But the affairs of classes whom they want to plunder, of neighbours between whom and them there exists a deep hereditary antipathy—whether they are to manage the affairs of these persons is quite another matter. The fallacy lies in treating Ireland as a single homogeneous whole. It is not so, and it has never been so. Where is that common nationality we hear so often talked of? What are the proofs of it? Is there community of race? Notoriously the inhabitants of Ireland are amongst the most mixed races of Europe. Community of language? Yes, that they have; but it is the language of England. Community of religion? We all know how fierce and incurable is the antagonism of two religions brought face to face. Is there absence of class differences? Unhappily they are more rampant in Ireland than in most countries of the world. ‘Our own Parliament’ may be a telling cry, but to be accurate something should be added. ‘Our own Parliament and other people’s property’ would more nearly represent what is asked for.

Again, with many persons it has become a habit to talk as if Ireland under our actual Parliamentary government were oppressed and ill used. How is it more so than Scotland or Wales or any other component part of the British Islands? With household franchise, and practically with electoral districts, with a larger share of Parliamentary representation than she is entitled to, either by population or by wealth, what single advantage is there that Englishmen or Scotch-

men possess that an Irishman does not share ? We are told that there is too much centralisation in the local administration. That may be admitted, and it is easily remedied, although I would just observe in passing that the cause of that abuse lies, and always has lain, not in any desire of the Anglo-Irish authorities for excessive power, but in the reluctance of Irishmen to trust one another. The peasantry and the landlords, the Orangemen and the Catholics, live unhappily in relations of mutual distrust, and so you are obliged to have stipendiary magistrates and other officials to deal impartially between them ; and so it is in other matters. Well, are Irish affairs neglected in Parliament ? So far from that, we hear hardly of anything else. Are Irish ideas treated with contempt ? So far from that, we have gone against our own traditions and ways of thinking, especially in the matter of the land, rather than leave an Irish grievance unredressed. It is childish to make a complaint in these days of the penal laws of the last century, or of disabilities imposed on Catholics, which expired sixty years ago.

I will call a witness on this part of the case who is above suspicion—Mr. Gladstone himself. Mr. Gladstone, in a speech which I quote, said, in 1871, ‘I have looked in vain for the setting forth of any practical scheme of policy which the Imperial Parliament is not equal to deal with, or which it refuses to deal with, and which is to be brought about by Home Rule. . . . You would expect, when it is said that the Imperial Parliament is to be broken up, that, at the very least, a case should be made out showing that there were great subjects of policy, and great demands, necessary for the welfare of Ireland, which representatives of Ireland had united to ask, and which the representatives of England, Scotland, and Wales had united to refuse. There is no such grievance. There is nothing that Ireland has asked, and which this country and this Parliament have refused.’ And if that were true fourteen years ago, as I believe it was, surely it is still more so now after the two Land Bills to which I have referred and a host of minor measures. But Ireland, it is said, is poor

and wretched. Yes, in comparison with England it is a poor country, but compare the state of the people now to what it was forty years ago—and I speak here from knowledge, for I knew the south of Ireland in early youth—and I affirm confidently that no country in Europe has made such rapid progress as regards the material well-being of the people. In their houses, in their food, in their dress, the difference is extraordinary. There is distress enough still, chiefly in the extreme west, where a very ignorant and helpless population clings to a barren soil. For that distress the only possible remedy is emigration, and emigration is exactly the remedy which Irish patriotism denounces.

But then we are told we ought to give Ireland a Parliament of its own, not because there are substantial grievances to remedy, but in deference to the principle of nationality. Now, I want you to examine without passion or exaggeration the plan that has been laid before Parliament, and see how far it meets the demand for nationality. No doubt the bill of last Session is dead. But though details may be altered, we may fairly presume that the next bill proceeding from the same authors will be drawn on the same general lines. Well, what will it do? In regard to foreign relations it places Ireland in a position of absolute dependence, absolute subjection to England, without even a voice in the Imperial Parliament. It does the same in regard to colonial, naval, and military matters. Inasmuch as we believe the Irish, left to themselves, would wish to endow their Church, we forbid them to do so, and as we know or suppose that they would immediately try to shut out British trade, we forbid them to alter customs duties without our leave. Our diplomacy may be carried on in a sense wholly opposite to Irish wishes; a campaign in which Irish troops are employed may be mismanaged; Ireland may, and probably will, feel strongly disposed to protect her industries; but on all these subjects under the bill of this year Irishmen will not have a word to say. In all these relations they were, and are, our equals; by the bill they are to become our dependants; and this is the scheme which is to satisfy the Irish demand.

that Ireland should be made a nation. A nation without an army, without a navy, without a diplomacy, without power to establish a Church or to alter a tariff! And subject, in addition, to a heavy tribute, just and reasonable enough, no doubt, but surely the most unpopular of all possible inflictions.

To my mind it is preposterous to talk of a plan of this kind as putting an end to agitation. That is an object for which we would sacrifice a good deal. But here you will gain at best a momentary lull. The first meeting of the new Irish Parliament, limited and controlled on all sides as it is to be, will be the beginning of a new agitation, more formidable than the old, because you have left yourselves less power to resist it. 'But, then,' says somebody, 'are you not laying stress on details which may be altered or amended?' Well, I do not see how that can be. The exclusion of Irish Members from the Imperial Parliament is the very foundation of the whole scheme. It would be unjust and even absurd that Irishmen should vote in the internal affairs of England and Scotland whilst retaining exclusive control over their own. It is practically impossible to draw a line of distinction between Imperial and local concerns. That has been admitted, and even if it were not so, how would it be possible to carry on business in a House of Commons which is on some questions to include Irish Members, and on others to shut them out? You would have a majority fluctuating from day to day, and no Minister could be sure of his position for a week together. If the machine is to work at all, you must confine the Irish Members to their own Parliament, and if you do not want separation—if you wish to safeguard Imperial interests, as Mr. Gladstone very properly desires to do—you must restrict that local Parliament from dealing with Imperial affairs. But if any man can suppose that Irishmen, of whom so many have been ready to throw away their own lives and take those of others in what they regard as a national cause—that they will be satisfied with this maimed and mutilated nationality, this small instalment of what they ask for—I will not say that

such a man must be blind, but I do say he must be shutting his eyes very hard.

Oh, but then I am told, ‘Why are you to be more Irish than the Irish themselves?’ If they express themselves satisfied with the terms which they have secured, are they not the best judges? My answer is: No doubt they would take these conditions, and be glad to get them, but they will not take them as a final or permanent settlement. They will secure what they can, and use it as a means of getting more. As a matter of tactics, they are quite right; we should do the same in their place. I do not accuse them of deceit if they practise a natural and discreet reticence as to the future. But even if you suppose the present leaders of Irish opinion to be satisfied, who are they that they should answer for the Irish people? They are at the head of the movement to-day; they may be—they probably will be—outbid by younger and more violent men to-morrow. They are the Girondins of the movement, and the Jacobins are ready to take their place. Mr. Parnell, you say, on behalf of Ireland is satisfied. Yes; but who will guarantee how long Ireland will be satisfied with Mr. Parnell? He is a Protestant; he is, I believe, a landlord; he is a member of the educated classes; how long will he remain leader of a Celtic, Catholic, landlord-hating democracy? History in all ages is full of instances of men who have led popular movements successfully and triumphantly until they began to think they had gone far enough. Then they have tried to check their followers instead of cheering them on, and as surely as they did so, they have been dethroned and trampled under foot. I do not believe that Mr. Parnell will be an exception.

We are told this is a plan to put an end to Irish agitation. I say that if it were put forward as a final proposal, with no hope of getting it materially altered in the future, scarcely one Irish voice would be raised in its favour. To the Loyalists—nearly, if not quite, one-third of the whole—it is absolutely hateful. For Repealers, Nationalists—call them what you will—it does not go far enough, except as a temporary expe-

dient. You are doing too much for one party and a great deal too little for the other. You will lose the first, you will not gain the latter.

Now, I believe that the motive which influences men most strongly in favour of some such legislation as this is sheer despair—about the most dangerous feeling by which men can be influenced when they set about the work of legislation. It is argued, ‘Nothing short of recognising Ireland as a nation will satisfy Irish feeling.’ Well, if there is any force in my argument, you are not going to recognise Ireland as a nation. But is it true that we can retain no reasonable hope of reconciling Irishmen to the Union? Why, the great administrative changes which have altered the face of Irish society have not had time to operate. The Land Act is not six years old; the Land Purchase Scheme (I mean that now in force) has scarcely come into operation at all. The Church was disestablished less than twenty years ago. Is it very unreasonable to suppose that with so many former causes of quarrel removed a different feeling may grow up? Why, how long was it before Scotland accepted union, I do not say cordially, but as a thing not absolutely intolerable, and which had brought some advantages for the sacrifices which it involved? Certainly not till near the end of the century; and yet the Scotch started from a far higher social level, and were not previously embittered against England. Yet, what Scotchman now dreams of repeal? What Scotchman is not proud of the fusion of his political nationality with that of England? Why is not a similar softening of feeling, a similar acceptance of political necessity, possible to the Irish also? I see only two alternatives—either they are reconcilable, and then we should not give up the attempt to reconcile them to union; or they are inspired, as some of them undoubtedly are, by a blind, passionate hatred to England, and in that case, is it wise to put into their hands the means of gratifying that amiable passion?

There is another matter which the electors will have seriously to consider. If the Irish people are to manage their own internal affairs, what are we to say about the land-

owners? Recollect that their position is peculiar. They are attached to the English connection, and because they are so attached, and because most of them are Protestants, they are cordially hated by the masses who will control the Irish Parliament. Many of them bought land under the Encumbered Estates Act thirty years ago, encouraged to do so by the English legislation of the time, and the savings of hundreds of laborious English lives are invested in Irish acres. When it was alleged that landlords asked rents higher than the tenantry could be fairly expected to pay, the English Parliament interfered, checked eviction, reduced these rents, and fixed them on a scale which was abundantly favourable to the tenant. Now there is a fresh outcry, and it is not concealed, it is not disguised that so soon as the Irish people are their own masters in that respect the land-owners will be stripped of the greater part of their property. I need not labour that point or waste your time in trying to prove it, because it is admitted by the Government themselves. The certainty of this spoliation is the only plea which could be put forward for that gigantic operation of buying them out which was contemplated in the late Session, and which could not have involved a less cost than 100 or 150 millions to be lent on the worst possible security. That Land Purchase scheme was, as we all know, very unfavourably received, and evidently had no chance of passing.

Now, I want to know whether it will be revived and pressed through or not. I do not believe it will. I do not believe that Parliament will accept it. But in that case what is our position—the position of the English Legislature—in regard to these proprietors? We know that if we are to hand them over to the Irish Parliament they will be robbed. We know that their rights are as clear and unquestionable as those of the English fund-holder, and that every abuse which may have attended their former tenure is removed. We—at least, the Government, which, if this Irish legislation is proceeded with, will still be in power—have recognised the duty of buying them out at a fair price in preference to handing

them over to their enemies. But to do our plain duty to them is expensive and unpopular, and therefore, I am afraid, it is only too likely that we are going to connive at open, barefaced, undisguised spoliation of those who have put their savings in Irish land relying on England's good faith and English honour. I will not mince my words in speaking of that proposal. I say it is not merely cowardly, it is dishonest, and until I see it I will not believe that a man like Lord Spencer, whom we all respect, and who is perfectly acquainted with the state of the case, will make himself a party to such a very shady transaction. I do not, of course, mean that his colleagues would be less scrupulous, but probably they do not realise the state of things as clearly as Lord Spencer, from his official experience, does and must do. Mr. Morley—I say it to his honour—holds fast to the Purchase Bill as a necessary accompaniment of Home Rule. So, at least, I read his speech. He does not wish to be responsible for the policy of plunder. But are not these two Ministers bound to consider the probability of Parliament rejecting the Purchase Scheme? And will it be a sufficient defence for them to tell the land-owners, 'We are very sorry; we meant to save you, but you see in the actual state of opinion we can do nothing more'? But they do not all go even that length. There is my friend Mr. Childers, who naturally enough, as an old Chancellor of the Exchequer, looks at the financial side of the question, and he will have nothing more to do with a Purchase Bill, though he concurred in bringing in one three months ago. What a united Cabinet! What a happy prospect for the future!

It has been suggested, I know, that some arrangement might be come to with the Irish leaders that would make Irish land secure without the need of purchase. I wish I could think that possible, but I do not. You cannot add to the many disabilities of the proposed Irish Parliament, or refuse to allow them to deal with the laws concerning land. You cannot use the Lord Lieutenant's veto permanently year after year as a protection against unjust legislation; and even

if a Dublin Parliament left the laws as they are (which is not likely), yet when every judge, every magistrate, and every policeman is selected from the popular party—that is, from the anti-rent party—I would not give much for the land-owner's chance of being able to enforce his legal claim, whatever the law might be.

But behind that question of the land there is another far graver and more dangerous. What are we going to do with Ulster? There is no doubt about the feeling of Ulstermen. If they make good their words and resist by force the attempt to impose upon them an authority to which they have never given consent, can you conceive a more hateful, a more discreditable position for the English Government than that of having to use force to drive away from themselves—to drive out of the English Constitution—men who only want to remain as they are under the law of the British Parliament, and not to be placed in the power of others whom they regard as hereditary enemies? It is answered, 'They have really nothing to fear. Their mistrust of the Catholics is unreasonable.' I am not so sure of that. But grant that the fact were so, does it lie in the mouths of the Home Rulers to hold that language? They are quite prepared to yield to the dislike which the majority of the Irish feel for being under the British Parliament, however causeless that dislike may be. Why is the same indulgence not to be shown to the feelings of Ulstermen, though they may have the misfortune of being Protestants and of being loyal subjects? But look at it another way. When we plead for maintaining the Union, one of the arguments most commonly employed against us is the impossibility of carrying on the business of the House of Commons, which contains ninety irreconcilable members out of 670—nearly one-seventh of the whole. What legislative body, it is asked, can keep order under such circumstances? But in the new Irish Parliament, if it is fairly composed, which I suppose is intended, one-fourth of its members, in all probability, will be irreconcilable. Either our friends, the English Home Rulers, are greatly exaggerating the danger

from obstruction at Westminster, or they think—possibly they do—that obstruction in Dublin does not matter. It is for them to choose which explanation they prefer. But meanwhile this, at least, is clear—without Ulster the new Parliament will be mutilated and incomplete; including Ulster it will contain a large proportion of members who will have no wish except to impede its operation and to make it ridiculous in the eyes of the world. We got shame and discredit enough by abandoning the American loyalists a hundred years ago, at the close of the American War. But in that case we had the excuse of necessity. No such excuse can be pleaded now, and even if, which I believe to be impossible, the Ulstermen were to accept the situation made for them, and consented to fraternise with the South, depend upon it that you would in that event have raised a new crop of enemies to England, and that these men and their descendants for generations would hate you with a hatred as bitter, more deserved, and tenfold more dangerous than that of the Celt.

Neither my voice nor your patience will suffice for the whole of this great argument, else I should have liked to say a word as to the precedents which have been drawn from other countries in favour of this dual scheme. Two of them may be put out of court at once. There is absolutely no resemblance between the system of the United States, or that under which Canada is governed, and the plan proposed for Ireland. The only parallel that I know of is that of Austria and Hungary. But that Austro-Hungarian Constitution is only twenty years old. It was adopted on compulsion rather than from choice, as the only means of keeping a vast, ill-compacted Empire from falling to pieces after a disastrous war. To say that it has always worked smoothly is a delusion, but the main and material difference is this, that in Austria and in Hungary the power of the Crown is enormous, the power of the two Legislatures in practice comparatively small. The Executive depends on the Emperor, and not on Parliamentary majorities. Under these circumstances, if the two Parlia-

were pull different ways. It is an inconvenience rather than a danger. I need not tell you that that is not the Constitution under which we live, and that here the forces which resist division would be infinitely weaker than they are in Austria. I will go no farther into this branch of the subject, not from want of material, but from want of time.

I have now given you—I hope without unfairness, certainly without intentional exaggeration—my reasons for objecting to this policy of repeal. I object to it because I believe it will be not the end but the beginning of a new stage in that agitation which we want to abate. I object to it because it imposes upon us the alternative, either of an enormous payment from the English Treasury or of a cruel and cowardly robbery of the property of one particular class. I object to it because we have no right to put one-third of the population of Ireland—and that the only portion which is really friendly to us—under a regimen which they dread and detest. Lastly, I object to it because I believe it will so weaken our hold upon Ireland that in the end—not, of course, at once, but after a few agitated and stormy years—we shall be under the necessity of undoing what we have done, and we shall have before us only the dismal choice between separation and reconquest. I end as I began. The issue is the greatest that any Englishman now living has had to try. On the decision of the next three weeks the future of Ireland, and to a great extent that of England, depends.

That decision once given is final and irrevocable. We can none of us foretell, still less can we control it, but we can each of us do our own duty by voice or vote, and however wire-pullers may intrigue, and however demagogues may declaim, I will not and cannot believe that it will be a decision unworthy of the former character and fatal to the future of our still United Kingdom.

LXIII

*THE LIBERAL UNIONISTS—THE IRISH LAND
QUESTION—REMEDIAL MEASURES*

LONDON : DECEMBER 7, 1886

I HAVE great pleasure in returning thanks on behalf of the House of Lords. We who belong to that House have been kept by circumstances very much out of the Irish dispute. We could not discuss a bill which was before the House of Commons, and, as you know, Mr. Gladstone's bill never reached our House. If it had, I do not think we should have felt much hesitation about disposing of it, and we should have referred it to the constituencies as the only possible judges in such a quarrel. But I am glad that we were not called upon to do our duty in that way, because the issue would have been complicated by the mere fact of a difference between the Houses, and considerations would have been introduced which had nothing to do with the merits of the case. As matters are, we stand in a different position ; the country has given its verdict, and our Home Rule friends will not find that they have much power of influencing the Irish policy of the present Parliament. Unless some extraordinary blunder is committed by the Government, we have a respite of three or four years in which to study and deal with this Irish difficulty. Now, while that question is pending it seems to me absolutely essential that we should keep up our separate organisation. We occupy a position which is peculiar, which may become difficult, but which I think we can maintain, and which it is very important that we should maintain. I will not say that we hold the balance of parties in the Commons—though that

is not far from the truth—but at any rate we have put an end to the favourite boast of Mr. Parnell's supporters that the balance of parties is in his hands. We do not stand on a Conservative platform; if we did, we should not have been justified in refusing to coalesce with the gentlemen now in office. We are Liberals *minus* Home Rule; and let me say in passing that we oppose Home Rule, not as a Liberal measure which we consider rash and dangerous, but as a measure essentially and in its nature reactionary, and calculated to discredit the Liberal cause. Well, no doubt Home Rule is the question of the moment, and while it remains so we must accept the fact that the Liberal party is split in two. It is useless to try to disguise that fact, and I am afraid the breach is one which will take some time in healing.

We are often told that in a little while we shall cease to exist as an organised body, and merge in one or other of the great political parties. That seems to me a wild and groundless prophecy. Why, to whom should we go? I do not see either my noble friend our Chairman, or my right hon. friend, whose absence we all regret, Mr. Chamberlain, nor yet Sir George Trevelyan, whose gallant fight against anarchy and sedition we all remember, joining the Conservative party, however they and we may be willing to see that the present Government has fair play. Nor is it likely, on the other hand, that men who have sacrificed their immediate political prospects—sacrificed them, it may be, for years to come—and who have pledged themselves to a certain line of policy in the face of all the world, will recant their utterances and swallow their principles for the sake of that most worthless of all supposed prizes—the possession of office without power to give effect to their own views. No, we shall not join the Conservatives, though under some circumstances we may support them, and assuredly we shall not turn Home Rulers. But then, it is said, the constituencies may snuff us out. Well, they may, but I do not believe they will, and for this reason. Every debate, every speech, every month that passes is a gain to our cause. There are hundreds of thousands of

voters who at the last election were taken by surprise. The subject was new to them; they had not considered it; and it is no wonder that they were carried away by the great name and influence of Mr. Gladstone. When they come to vote again they will know what they are voting about; and I do not think the result will be favourable to Mr. Parnell and his friends. Now, I have said that we should gain by the increased knowledge which experience brings; and we are getting that experience now. What is this anti-rent agitation that we see going on? Just bear in mind the circumstances. Only five years ago the Irish peasantry, or rather farmers, cried out for fixity of tenure and judicially settled rents. It was against our ideas; but they got what they asked for. Many people complained that the scale of rents fixed was unduly favourable to the tenants; nobody, as far as I know, complained that it was unduly favourable to the landlords. But because a fall in prices has taken place, which was expected, and to a large extent allowed for, the Irish agitators, and I am afraid among them a good many of the Irish priests, are crying out against the monstrous hardship of holding the tenantry to terms which they themselves were asking for, clamouring for, only six or seven years ago. Now, just consider what an absence of the most elementary notions of justice that state of things shows. Two parties differ on a question of price. One of them asks for arbitration and gets it; the decision of the arbitrator which satisfies him at the moment turns out less favourable than he expected; instantly he cries out, 'Oh, your ruling goes for nothing; we must break the judicial contract and make a new one.' Are people who reason in that way to be trusted with the property of other men, and with absolute power over a minority whom they detest, distrust, and fear?

There is another matter for the public to consider. We are often told, 'If you had agreed to the Home Rule Bill nothing would have been heard of this anti-rent campaign.' Well, does anybody in his senses believe that? Part of the scheme of last year was that Irish rents should be paid to the

State—in the English Treasury. Would there not have been just as much trouble in recovering these rents for the State as there is in enforcing payment to the landlords? Or if the plan of land purchase had been dropped, and the land-owners been left to make their own terms with an Irish Executive and an Irish Legislature, is there any doubt but that we should have seen them unscrupulously plundered under our eyes and as a consequence of our act? The more I reflect on the situation the clearer it becomes to me as to Mr. Gladstone that it is the land question quite as much as the question of nationality that is at the bottom of the present trouble; and that if we wish to do any good, our first care ought to be to help the Government in dealing with that. The first step to that end is to assert the supremacy of the law. I do not hold that to be as difficult as many friends of mine do. Irish agitators are dangerous people to run away from; they are not dangerous people to resist. I think that if all Irish officials from policemen upwards are only relieved from the fear of being handed over in a few months or years to a Nationalist Government, you will not find this anti-rent movement as dangerous as it looks from a distance. Of course, I do not mean that allowance should not be made for real distress, for real inability to pay; but the great majority of cases where payment is resisted do not come under that description. And when a well-to-do farmer contends that it is unfair to hold him to a bargain made five years ago, it is a reasonable answer to say, 'Why did you press for fixity of rents if you were not prepared to take the chances of good or bad times?'

We still have to consider what remedial measures are possible. I will not attempt to mislead you. I do not deceive myself by any sanguine expectation that we can fully satisfy Irish demands by anything which we do. As far as I can make it out, the real wishes of the Irish masses or of those who lead them are three—(1) the land for nothing, or next to nothing; (2) protection to Irish industries against English or foreign competition; and (3) the power and predominance, in

some form or another, of the Catholic hierarchy. Now, the first of those results cannot be obtained without robbery ; the second would be a reversal of all our commercial policies and an injury to our own people ; the third is equally opposed to the ideas of Liberalism and to the feelings—say, if you will, the prejudices—of the English people. The truth is that if Ireland is to be governed by Irish ideas, as the phrase is, no half measure, like that of last year, will be of the slightest permanent value. We have only two alternatives before us—either to give Ireland at least as much of independence as Canada or Australia enjoy—which, with regard to our own safety (to say nothing else), we cannot ; or firmly and steadily to maintain the Union, removing such causes of complaint as we can deal with, and trusting to time to do the rest. I own I have seen with some surprise the tolerance, not to call it encouragement, which this Irish agitation against law and property is receiving from persons in England who ought to know better. Are they quite sure that the complaint may not be catching ? Are they quite sure that the example may not be followed nearer home ? The teaching of the Irish agitators is open, undisguised Socialism—patriotism often only the pretext, plunder generally the object. Is it for men like great English land-owners, is it for capitalists and large employers of labour, to give even a silent sanction to teaching of that kind ? I think they are cutting a rod for their own backs, and that they had better be careful while it is yet time. In conclusion I say only this—let us firmly hold our own ground ; let us avoid all bitterness in dealing with former colleagues and allies ; let us keep the door open for reconciliation ; but let us hold out no hope that such reconciliation can take place on the basis of any arrangement, of any new Constitution, that will loosen the existing ties between England and Ireland. If we keep steadily on these lines, we may not be going the right way to get into office, if anyone cares for it, but we shall accomplish something worthier and better—we shall have the respect of all honest men, and the consciousness that we have done well for our country.

LXIV

THE BLIND—THEIR TRAINING AND EDUCATION

PRESTON : APRIL 26, 1887

OF all ways in which the Jubilee can be celebrated there can be none better, none more appropriate, than the enlarging or endowing of an institution whose object is to help the helpless, to relieve those who are struggling under grievous disabilities, and to utilise human talents and capacities which, left to themselves, might probably be useless both to society and to their possessors. I need not waste time in explaining what are the claims of the blind to assistance. Those claims are not likely to be disregarded. The danger, as it seems to me, is much greater that they should be dealt with in a blundering and mischievous fashion than that they should be treated with indifference or neglect. But there is one circumstance in connection with any institution for the aid of the blind that may be worth notice. It is absolutely free from risk of a kind which attends most charities. It is an old commonplace, but not the less important to bear in mind, that charity is very apt to create the distress it professes to relieve. As somebody said long ago, if you pay men for digging they will dig; if you pay men for begging they will beg. If we were greatly to relax the system on which Poor Laws, for instance, are administered, we should soon double the number of paupers. But you may be quite sure of this, that whatever you do for the blind—if every individual among them were lodged, fed, and clothed for nothing—though I do not say that would be a very judicious form of charity—yet you would not thereby have increased the numbers of the blind by one. Nature alone determines

how many they shall be, and I am not aware that science has so far thrown any light on the causes of congenital blindness. Many of you, I dare say, will be surprised to learn what the number of the blind population in England is. By the census of 1881 it amounted to 22,800 persons, or one in 1,138 of the total population. But there is one thing satisfactory about these figures—it is, that the proportion is decreasing. In 1861, there was one blind person to every 1,037 ; in 1871, one to every 1,052 ; in 1881, as I have said, one to every 1,138.¹ This change for the better is due—as most improvements in the lot of the human race are due—to science. The great majority of cases of blindness in infancy, I am told, are not congenital—that is, they do not date from birth. They are due to disease, often caused or aggravated by neglect, and I hope we may look forward to a much more rapid diminution of such cases in the future, as I have shown you has taken place in the last thirty years. But we live in the present, and it is with the present that we have to deal ; and whatever faults we may have, neglect of the blind has not been one. There are at this moment upwards of fifty institutions in the British Islands for their care and assistance—I may, perhaps, be understating my case, I dare say there are others of which I have not heard, but I speak here of what I know—nor are there any signs that the interest felt in them is diminishing. On the contrary, there is at this moment a Commission sitting to inquire into their needs, and to consider how the relief afforded to them can be made more effective. Nor does England stand alone in this matter. On the Continent and in the United States similar work is being done, and a constant comparison of results obtained goes on between various countries.

We cannot make blindness otherwise than a heavy and terrible privation. We cannot—it is useless to pretend it—put the blind on a level, generally speaking, as to either usefulness or enjoyment of life, with the seeing. But we can do much to lessen their disabilities and to lighten their darkness

¹ By the Census of 1891 the proportion had further decreased to one per 1,296.

—how much, scarcely any one knows except the few who have given a close and practical attention to the subject. There are few chapters of private biography more interesting than those which deal with the lives of the illustrious blind. For all human life is, or ought to be, a struggle. On that condition alone does it possess interest for other human beings, and the triumph of energy over difficulties has seldom been more signally illustrated than in the records of sightless men who have successfully held their place in the great competition of life under the heaviest of merely physical privations. The instances are many, and to some of you, at least, they are familiar. Take, as an example, Saunderson, the friend of Newton, and one of the first mathematicians of his time—a man who could calculate the movements of planets which he had never seen, through a sky whose very appearance must have been to him unimaginable. Take the still more extraordinary case of Huber, the Geneva naturalist, whose observations and experiments on bees have still, I believe, a scientific value. Yet those observations must have been made by the use of other eyes than his own, for he was blind, if not from birth, at least from childhood. Take a less distinguished but still notable person, Metcalfe, of Knaresborough, who laid out many of the roads in Derbyshire a century ago. He was an engineer, who is reported on admitted authority to have acted as a guide in that mountainous country. His favourite amusement was hunting, and he once rode a race and won it, and also served as a bugler in the campaign which ended at Culloden. This man was blind from a child. And coming to our own time, who does not remember, and who does not respect, the late Mr. Fawcett? Of all men in the world, a debater in Parliament most wants to see the people he is talking to, to read their faces, to understand their mood. Yet no one who ever heard Mr. Fawcett will deny that he was not merely an able lecturer on political topics, but, what is quite a different thing, an effective and powerful debater. Well, men such as I have described have a use and value beyond the actual result of their work. They show what can be done;

they hold out an example and an encouragement to others similarly situated ; and imagination plays so large a part in all our lives, however little imaginative we may think ourselves, that the anticipation of success or the anticipation of failure will in either case go far to produce the expected result. In every school, in every workshop, in every institution intended for the aid of the blind there should be brought under their notice the record of what men similarly afflicted have accomplished. They need a stimulus of this kind, for when they mix with persons who can see they are exposed, especially as children, to various influences which are not to their advantage.

Sometimes—I hope very rarely—they are treated with neglect or contempt ; more commonly they are made the objects of an injudicious pity. They are the ‘poor blind.’ Little or nothing is expected of them ; they have a claim on everybody’s services, and need give none in return. Now that is exactly the kind of sympathy which they ought not to have. The object should be to make them lose as far as possible the sense of an isolated and peculiar existence, to take them out of themselves and enable them to mix in the great stream of life which is flowing round them. How is that to be done ? In the first place, they must be enabled by mechanical processes which are familiar enough to read. Of course they can read only books printed in a peculiar type cognisable by the touch ; but books of that kind are happily already many, and the number is increasing. In the next place, and that is even more important, they must be trained to earn their living. I am not speaking obviously of those who are well off, though I do not know that it does anybody harm to have learnt some mechanical occupation. The consciousness of utility and the sense of self-respect can never be thoroughly developed in those who are living on charity, however little it may be their own fault that they are so situated. And, lastly, as I conceive, it is very desirable that they should be brought together. They require skilled and special teaching. Their peculiar requirements must be studied, and what is of great importance in a

school for the blind, and there alone, they are all on a level. They are helped, but they are not singled out as objects of compassion. They are accustomed to the idea that to a large extent they must and can help themselves. It is not for me in these brief remarks to indicate in detail what is the best method to be employed in their training. But of one thing I am sure, because all authorities on the subject agree upon it—there can be no greater mistake than to teach them as a general rule to rely on music as a means of support. I am not speaking of high or exceptional talent—that constitutes a case apart—but only of ordinary skill in this art. The musical profession is overstocked, and though musical accomplishments have their value as adding pleasure to life, they are not a very sure way of earning a living. The question whether blind men as a rule are capable—that is, of course, after proper training—of earning their own living is one on which experts differ. A minority contend that they are, or ought to be; the greater number hold only that they can go a long way towards it, and argue quite justly that it is one thing to support a man in idleness, and quite another to supplement his earnings by gift or pension when he has done all in his power to maintain himself. My opinion is worth nothing on such a point; it is enough for me, and I think it will be enough for you, to rest in this conclusion—that an incomplete success is better than none, and that the experience of life teaches most of us to be content in the end with much less than we aimed at when we began.

It is far more important to consider what the public and what the State can do for the 20,000 blind persons. I believe a great deal may be accomplished by simple means. Very few people would grudge some extra help, whether from rates or taxes, or both, towards the teaching of the blind. It is obvious that a blind pupil causes more labour to the teacher than another, and is likely to yield him less return on the principle of payment by results. I do not see why that difference should not be recognised, and an extra premium given for every such pupil in one shape or another. We want workshops for the blind

in every large town, both for instruction and adult employment. We want Government inspection for blind schools and the most intelligent of the blind pupils employed in them, but always as a rule under the supervision of teachers who can see. If it is objected that these things will cost money, my answer is, that I saw a statement at a recent Conference to the effect that 40,000*l.* a year is paid out of the rates to maintain healthy adults among the blind at the public expense. I have not verified those figures; I give them as they reach me; but if they represent anything like the truth, the cost of making the blind poor self-helping, or nearly so, can hardly be as great as that of keeping them paupers. But I do not treat it, and I do not ask you to treat it, as a matter of money. It is really a great deal more. A blind man untrained must be nearly useless, and a useless life can seldom be a harmless life. We can only remain healthy in mind or body by action, and it must be action directed to some rational purpose. The ideal condition in which every man shall have his work to do, and shall do it, is very far off, but we may approach nearer and nearer to what we cannot reach, and it is a great step in that direction to develop the faculties and to utilise the powers of a class numerous enough to form the population of a considerable town, helpless enough to call out sympathy and pity from all their neighbours, and for the most part intelligent and energetic enough to profit by training if once they are put in the right way, and encouraged not to believe that their infirmities are an insuperable bar to success.

LXV

*PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE—THE DEMANDS OF
IRELAND—THE IRISH CRIMINAL LAW AMEND-
MENT BILL—THE LIBERAL PARTY*

LIVERPOOL: JUNE 3, 1887.

I HAVE been asked to take the chair at this meeting, and to say a few words on the Irish question, which, whatever else it may have done, has created a Liberal Unionist party. For eighteen months England has been talking and thinking of nothing else. The newspapers have overflowed with speeches upon it. England and Scotland have been almost ignored; parties have been broken up, and new and strange, though temporary, combinations have been formed, and we seem not much nearer to a solution than we were a year ago. There are many people who will say that this is not an unmixed evil. Many good Conservatives no doubt think that the best service that Ireland can render to England is that of saving her from the dangers of over-legislation; and Ministers, although they may be kept up later at night than is agreeable, and although they may have to listen to many speeches which are neither useful nor pleasant, have this consolation—that they are not expected to bring in bills, and that practically they are almost exempt from criticism upon their official proceedings. It is a serious state of things, but we may get out of it. No doubt there is a great deal of useful legislative work that might be taken in hand, but there is nothing specially urgent in point of time, and attempts to settle difficult questions such as that of local administration or the government of London at a time when all the world is thinking of something else, are generally unsuccessful, because there are

always obstacles in the way, and you have to get up steam in order to push through those obstacles. If you cannot do that you fail, and then the question, whatever it may be, is left in a worse position for settlement than it was before. I think, therefore, we can afford to be patient, and that the ingenious scheme of forcing us to do what the Irish Members want, by making it impossible for us to do anything else, is not likely to be successful in practice. It is also to my mind a good thing that we have been compelled, and shall be compelled yet further, to revise our system of Parliamentary debate. We should have to do that anyhow, even apart from organised obstruction.

Forty years ago, when I first knew the House of Commons, I doubt if more than 200 Members, or, say roughly, at the utmost one-third of the House, took any part in debate. Now it is quite the exception if among the 670 Members you find one silent Member. That alone would have forced us to reconsider our procedure. We have got to learn, and to make everybody learn, that no man has the right to occupy the time of Parliament by saying over and over again what has been said a hundred times before, even if he does it with no worse intention than that of making his constituents think what a great man he is. I am not impressed by the outcry against silencing the minority. In this country you cannot silence anybody. The press and the platform fix your attention, and it is outside Parliament that in the main opinion is formed. What we have to do is only to put that opinion into the form which it must assume when it is to be embodied into action. I think, then, that we may be obliged to our Irish friends for putting before us the problem of dealing with the subject in such a manner that we must solve it. There is nothing unreasonable in closing a debate when it is clear that there is nothing new or important to add to what has already been said; and the case is infinitely stronger when we are dealing, not merely with vanity or loquacity on the part of individuals, but with systematic and intentional waste of

time. To attempt to obstruct for destruction's sake, where it could be proved, is an offence against Parliament, and it may fairly be treated as such.

I say nothing here of the discreditable scenes which I am afraid are lowering the House of Commons in the public esteem. They are simply a disgrace to Parliament and the nation. You cannot wholly stop them. No action taken by any Speaker, however energetic, will force men to express themselves like gentlemen, if it is not their nature so to do. Something must be allowed for national habits and the normal language of Celtic controversy : but personal insults are not to be tolerated, and I think that the House collectively will have before long to say to some members of it, ' If you do not understand what decency means, we do, and we intend to enforce it.'

Well, our Irish friends have made up their minds that they will beat us by mere delay and waste of time. I think in that matter they are too sanguine. The game may be a good one, but two can play at it. Obstruction is hard work to the obstructors, the more so as they are fewer in number than those whom they are obstructing. It is on both sides a trial of patience, and patience, as far as I have yet heard, is not one of the strong points of Celtic character. We must not forget that when this Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill—that is its name—is once passed, in whatever shape it may finally pass, their chief weapon of offence is gone. We cannot well refuse to hear them, even at what we may consider an excessive and unreasonable length of time, on a question which touches them and their constituents so nearly. But we are not bound to show equal forbearance when they deal in the same manner with subjects which concern them no more than they do all other Members. Let us pass this bill. Let us settle the procedure of Parliament, and in another year, though obstruction may, and probably will, still be a nuisance, it will no longer be a serious impediment. But I go further, and I tell you this, that the notion that by passing any such measure as English Home Rulers now propose, you will settle

the Irish question, is on the face of it a delusion, which no reasonable man can fall into unless he wilfully shuts his eyes. What is the Irish demand? We all know—nationality. And what does nationality mean? I will admit at once that it does not mean formal separation from the British Crown. That may be the wish of Irish-Americans, but it is not the object, I believe, of any important party in Ireland. The Irish would be content to remain nominally subject to the Queen, but upon this condition, that they should deal with all merely Irish subjects as freely as Canada and Australia deal with theirs. They would claim liberty to arrange their own tariff, which would, of course, be a Protectionist one; to clear out the land-owners on the merest pretence of compensation; to establish a Catholic ascendancy which Ulster would never endure; and to have the absolute control of Irish affairs through an Irish Executive. The Queen would be guided by Irish advisers, and, as our system renders it necessary that the Crown should act under Ministerial advice, that is, in effect, equivalent to the separation of the country.

Now that, I believe, stated without exaggeration, is what the Irish want. That is what they would rest satisfied with, at least for a time. But observe that is not what any English statesman has proposed. That demand goes immeasurably further than the bill of last year. And I do not suppose that any successor of Mr. Gladstone will endeavour to go further than he did; in fact, the talk we hear now is all in the opposite sense. The proposals of 1886, as we are now told, are to be watered down. Irish Members are still to sit in the Imperial Parliament. The supremacy of the Imperial Parliament is to be recognised. There is to be an Irish Parliament, but it is to be confined to strictly local and subordinate functions: in fact, in Ireland they call it a big Vestry, and nothing more. That is the language of English Home Rulers at the present moment. Now, let us see what it means and what it comes to. Irish Members are to sit in the Imperial Parliament. Are they to vote on purely English and Scotch affairs? If they are, we have this absurdity, that

they are to make laws for us by which we are to be bound, and that we are not to make laws for them. That is so utterly preposterous that I cannot believe that it will ever be seriously proposed. But it is said that there is another alternative. They may come over to vote on Imperial questions, but on those only. Well, in the first place, it would not be easy—I doubt whether it would be possible—to distinguish between the two. I admit that you can draw a distinction, but look what an utterly chaotic condition of things that arrangement would produce. You would never know who had got a majority. On English and Scotch questions the majority might be one way; on Imperial questions the Irish Members would come in and turn the balance the other way. What government would be possible on such terms? No, you may depend upon it that these amiable attempts to soften down the Home Rule scheme of last year so as to suit English tastes will not succeed. There are only three possible alternatives—separation, union in the main as we have it, or the same independence as the self-governing Colonies. Now, the first alternative, that of separation, is not worth discussing. It is not a matter of practical politics. Honour, interest, safety, make it impossible. The other two policies are both practicable, but all between the two is only delusion and deception. You cannot have one country governed by two Parliaments. Start an Irish Parliament, surround it by whatever restrictions and limitations you please, and in a few years you will either have to suppress it altogether or declare it independent and supreme. That is the one point in all this confused controversy in which I for one feel absolutely certain that I am a Unionist. I may be asked, If the Irish want to be treated as a Colony, why should they not? My answer in the first place is that it is a matter which concerns us as well as them. Three millions have no natural claim that I know of to override 34,000,000. In the next place, I very much doubt whether they have realised in their own mind what it is they are asking for. They are our equals now. Under their own plan in the only way in which

it could possibly be worked they would be our dependants and our subordinates. Federal union is possible where many communities not of very unequal strength are concerned ; but federal union between one powerful state and one much weaker means virtually the servitude of the weaker one of the two. As for those ingenious gentlemen who have plans for a federated Empire to govern by central councils, and who ask why Ireland might not, like the Colonies, be a province, it is enough to say, ‘Wait till you have got your scheme in working order ;’ and I should say they will have some trouble to do that. It is a grand and attractive idea, and I do not wonder it should have laid hold of the popular imagination : but in the Colonies it is not seriously discussed, and ninety-nine colonists out of a hundred will tell you that, as applied to the present state of things, it is fantastic and impracticable.

Well, then, what is the actual state of the case ? It is not satisfactory ; that we all admit. Resist the Irish demand, and you have the existing agitation to fight. Concede it, and you will be confronted with a new agitation to-morrow. We must make up our minds to trouble in any event. But there are some indications, I think, of a better time coming. We must not shrink from some sacrifices in order to settle the Irish land question. That more than anything else is at the root of the evil. The Land Act of 1881 was probably a wise measure under the circumstances of the time. It was revolutionary if you please, but it was applied to a state of things in which any remedy of a milder kind would have been useless. It has succeeded over a large part of Ireland. It has failed chiefly in those districts where a crowded population with little employment hold on desperately to a wretched soil. In those districts there would probably be as much distress as there is now if landlords and rents were unknown. You have there a soil on which no tenants could thrive, and I am afraid you have, for the most part, also there tenants who would not thrive on any soil. You cannot do anything, or very little, for the people in these parts except to encourage

them to move away. In the West of Ireland what we want is to help and encourage the tenants to buy their farms. That cannot be done in a day or in a year, but in a generation it may be done, and with a population living on their own land, with increased power of local self-government, which nobody wants to refuse, and with diminished numbers—at least in the West—I see no reason why Ireland should not in time become reconciled, as Scotland was reconciled long ago. Past history is quickly forgotten, and we hardly realise how long and how deeply the Scotch Union was detested by the ancestors—and not the very remote ancestors—of men who to-day would maintain it at the risk of their lives. If all these things fail, the next generation will have before them the same difficulty that now exists, and possibly a new solution may have to be tried. But that is an ‘if,’ and I think it would be cowardly, it would be suicidal, to yield to the counsels of despair and throw up the cards before the game is played out.

Now, I suppose you will expect me to say a few words about that bill which is absorbing the whole time of the House of Commons.¹ To me the most remarkable thing about it is that it shows the extraordinary power which phrases and nicknames exercise over the English mind. It is called a Coercion Bill, and that is enough. Nobody asks whether it is intended to coerce criminals or innocent men. It is a good deal less stringent on the whole than the bill of 1882, for which most of the opponents of the present bill voted. The principal object of it is one which I should have thought English people would approve—namely, to take away from criminals the absolute impunity which they now enjoy in the case of certain offences when they are brought to trial before juries which notoriously dare not or will not convict. Nor should I have expected that we would forget this certain fact, that for every man whom the bill, if it be passed, will subject

¹ ‘A Bill to make better Provision for the Prevention and Punishment of Crime in Ireland.’ Introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Balfour, and read a first time after five nights’ debate, on April 1, 1887. Received the Royal Assent, July 19, 1887.

to legal coercion it will rescue half a dozen from coercion which is illegal. As to the details, we are in no way pledged to them. The provision for trying Irish offenders in England seems to me open to question, but if what I hear be true, then that will be dropped, I suppose. Care will also have to be taken lest in increasing the summary power of magistrates, which is quite right, we give them power to punish offences which are really slight with undue severity. That is a point upon which honest and reasonable criticism, from whatever quarter it comes, may be of real value.

We are told that what we are doing in Ireland we should not dare to apply to a Scotch or English community. My answer is that if through local causes in any district in this country offences went unpunished as they now do in Ireland, I believe the English people as a whole would not hesitate to apply a similar remedy. Then again it is described as a mere device to enable land-owners to recover their rents. Even land-owners are entitled to protection from the law as well as other people. Through exceptional circumstances the landlords have been compelled to sacrifice part of their rents, receiving in return a Parliamentary guarantee for the rest. But as a matter of fact I believe that the intimidation practised and the injury inflicted have been much more frequently on the tenants themselves than on either their landlords or their agents. You may take it as a general rule that wherever popular violence supersedes the law—though the rich may be the intended and immediate object of attack—it is generally the poor who suffer. Then it is said, ‘You ought to have fixed a limit of time, and not made the Act permanent.’ Well, that is a detail, and not vital either way. But there are two points to be considered. One is that the law is less respected if it is to cease to be the law in a year or two, and the other that this Bill if it passes will not be enforced a day longer than Parliament pleases that it should be. It is absurd to suppose, as I have seen it put somewhere, that it would be difficult to pass a repealing Statute. If a majority of the House of Commons thought the bill had lasted long enough,

a repealing Statute (which would meet with no obstruction) would pass in a single sitting. Just one more remark in this connection. It is constantly repeated, and it is repeated by speakers who ought to know better, and who probably do know better, that the combination formed by the Irish peasants for the purpose of withholding rents is only like a strike for wages in this country, and therefore not an offence. You to whom I speak are not likely to be imposed upon by rhetorical tricks of that kind. When a working man strikes for higher wages he does that which he has a perfect right to do. It may be wise, or it may be foolish, but he refuses to sell his labour, which is his own, below a certain rate. When an Irish tenant refuses to pay rent, being able to do so, he is breaking a bargain into which he freely entered, and, moreover, a bargain which in most cases has been already modified by Parliament in his favour. He is using another man's property without paying for it. There is a slight difference, I think, in point of justice and morality between holding on to what is your own, even if you rate it at too high a price, and holding on to property which belongs to your neighbour.

Now, I know that I have detained you very long. I have only one word in conclusion. What are to be our relations as matters stand towards that section—I am afraid we must admit the larger section—of the Liberal party which has accepted the principle of Home Rule? That is the immediate, the practical question. It is useless to cry peace when there is war. It is impossible, however we may wish it, to bridge over the differences that divide us. They are too deep and too wide. But this Irish question is not the only one in the range of politics, nor can it last for ever. We shall want each other's help again, and we must remember, in actions as well as in words, that we are after all friends who have honourably differed, and not enemies. Lord Hartington has shown us an admirable example of the spirit in which this controversy should be treated. The Irish Home Rulers, on the other hand, have given us, and give us every day, an illustration of the manner in which grave and high problems

of statesmanship may be vulgarised and brutalised in the mouths of brawling demagogues. Let us profit both by the example and the warning. We are aiding our own party more than they know; for if Liberalism and Irish Home Rule come to mean the same thing, the prospects of Liberal success in the English constituencies are not brilliant. I do not pretend to see far into the future, but in one future I do not believe. I do not believe that the democracy will inaugurate their power by arrogating functions, abandoning rights, and ignoring claims which their predecessors have for three generations respected. There is not really much sympathy in England with the Irish Home Rule movement; most of those who have taken it up have done so in deference to the authority of a great leader, and from a reluctance to break through Parliamentary ties which we respect, although we regret the result. I have no doubt for my part that the verdict of the electors when they are appealed to again will be as it was last year—supposing, that is, that we do not absolutely throw away the two or three, or perhaps more, Sessions which must intervene. But, however that may be, we Liberal Unionists are not worshippers of the jumping cat, however popular that form of faith may be. We have clear and firm convictions which we do not mean to abandon; and if, unhappily, the choice lies between the two, we are quite ready to give up our political prospects and our political position, but we are not ready to give up the Union.

LXVI

*THE STATE OF AGRICULTURE—DEPRECIATION IN
THE VALUE OF LAND—CAUSES—REMEDIES*

MANCHESTER : SEPTEMBER 1, 1887

. . . . I PASS from local affairs to the consideration of the general state of the agricultural interest in England, but I cannot speak in rose-coloured terms. I have nothing on this subject to put before you that can be very satisfactory to utter or to hear. We sometimes exaggerate in talking of the general depression which affects industry in this country. However severe it may be as affecting particular occupations, it has not prevented England, as a whole, from growing during the last ten years richer instead of poorer. That is proved by evidence absolutely beyond dispute. But when we come to the land it is impossible to speak too strongly of the losses which have been and are being sustained. The tendency is rather to underrate them than otherwise, because to a considerable extent they have fallen on a class of persons whom they have not reduced to absolute and visible poverty, and because the English land-owner and the English farmer are not as a rule given to howling and lamentation. They bear what they have to bear silently and doggedly. If they have made a bargain by which they are losers they keep to it, and they decidedly object to being pitied. It is impossible even to attempt an estimate of what the fall in the value of land has been during the last ten years in many parts of England. It is certainly not less than 40 per cent. Here, and in the north generally, where we have large towns close

at hand, it is still comparatively slight. I should say that 20 per cent. would be a fair average, but if we take the whole area of England I believe a mean between those two figures would not be far from the truth, and that a depreciation of 30 per cent. would fairly represent the change which has taken place. Consider what a destruction of capital that represents. I have no material, and I can find none, which would enable me to separate the value of land from that of houses and land used for other purposes than that of cultivation, and therefore I cannot tell you what the value of agricultural land itself is ; but land and houses together have commonly been reckoned at something like 2,000,000,000*l.* ; and if agricultural land be taken as representing one-half of that amount you would have upon that estimate a loss of 300,000,000*l.* falling on the land-owning class. And I am afraid I cannot accept the consolation which some people are inclined to offer when they say, ‘ All the better for the small owners ; they will have a chance to buy when the big men are ruined.’ My idea is that the result will be exactly the other way. The big owners will be able, not always, but generally, to hold their own. The smash will be, and indeed already is, among the small squires, the owners of a few hundred acres—a valuable class whom we should most of us be glad to see increased rather than diminished in numbers. As to the loss sustained by the farmers I cannot even attempt to estimate the amount. What I do know is that they have suffered even worse than the world in general believes. And it is a singular proof of the elasticity and financial strength of the community as a whole that it has borne with so little apparent injury the heavy and even tremendous blows which have fallen on the greatest as well as the oldest of all our industries.

When we have such a state of things as this to deal with there are two questions which every rational man asks and tries to get an answer to. First, What are the causes of the mischief ? and, next, What remedies will be of service ?

In this case the causes are not far to seek. The principal one is, of course, the foreign competition, which we all feel,

and which we are likely to feel for a long while to come. It is argued, I hope with truth, that we have seen the worst of it; that in many cases the very low prices that have ruled are due to foreign speculations which have been a loss to the speculators; that the cheap but excessively wasteful mode of culture in new countries cannot go on long without exhausting the soil; and that, if the American and Australian supplies seem inexhaustible, there is rapid increase in the local demand caused by increasing population in those countries. That may be; I hope it is so; but the prospect of relief coming in that way seems to me distant. But there are other causes at work in depreciating the value of land just now. There is necessarily uncertainty as to what legislation may do. We do not talk politics here, but it is quite obvious that the governing class, which, as a rule, possesses no real property, will look at things very differently from a class which is in an exactly opposite position. I am not myself very much alarmed. I do not think the Irish system as we have it now is good outside Ireland, where it arose out of necessity rather than choice. But if we had it here I dare say we could make it work. Where there is good sense and forbearance most systems can be made to work. The one thing fatal is uncertainty—suspense through not knowing what is going to happen. I am sure that that feeling of uncertainty is at this moment checking a great deal of improvement which land-owners would otherwise be willing to make, but which they will not make if they do not feel sure who is to profit by it. And there is another circumstance that tells against us—that curious feeling, not to me very intelligible, but undoubtedly strong, which in these days attaches a certain unpopularity to the possession of land, at any rate to its possession on a large scale. If it were merely the natural prejudice of those having nothing against those who have much, then, however we might regret it, we should say that it was simply human nature. But what puzzles me is why an exceptional amount of prejudice should attach to that form of property which yields the smallest return, which has the least power of evading taxation, and

which involves the largest amount of public and social duty. However that may be, the fact remains that there is undoubtedly a prejudice against land-owning, and many persons who, having made money, would twenty-five or thirty years ago have invested a part of it as a matter of course in land, now prefer investments which are less exposed to the public eye, which involve fewer claims on the owners, and which are more easily transferred in case of need to other hands or to other countries. I hope, for my part, that the feeling I speak of is only temporary, and that it will pass off when we have shaken down into the new order of things. But while it lasts it necessarily tends to aggravate the existing agricultural depression.

There are other circumstances of a merely temporary nature which we have to allow for. Lord Cairns' Act¹—or rather, perhaps, the change in popular feeling which made the Act possible—has thrown large quantities of land rather suddenly on the market just at a time when for other reasons there are fewer buyers than before. That, no doubt, will come right before long. These new estates will be absorbed, and the ultimate effect will be good, but for the moment it rather increases than lessens the actual difficulties of the situation. Some people would add another explanation of the land-owners' and farmers' difficulties, and ascribe them in part to the demand common of late years for higher wages. I do not think that demand has had much effect of the kind supposed. Cheap labourers do not always imply cheap labour. You must take the quality as well as the cost, and if the labourer asks for and gets many things now which he did not in the days of our grandfathers, there is the certain fact that he does not come on the poor rates, as he used to do. In the next place, you must consider the extended employment of labour-saving machinery. If it be true, as I sometimes hear asserted, that the quality of labour now supplied is inferior to what it was, that the younger men work with less zeal and show less interest in their work than their elders, that is really

¹ The Settled Land Act, 1882.

a serious matter. I hear that kind of talk very often in Kent. Sometimes I hear it in Lancashire, but not so often ; but I notice that it comes generally from elderly men. They say that things are not what they used to be, and the notion that the world is going to the bad is just as much a sign of advancing age as losing one's hair or one's teeth. It is always satisfactory to have companions in misfortune, and I believe there is no doubt that what is happening in England in consequence of competition from beyond the seas is not peculiar to this country. The peasant cultivators of France and Italy are suffering at least as much as our farmers are, and in one respect they are worse off. For there are very few of them who do not know what mortgages mean, and holders of mortgages as a general rule are less indulgent than landlords.

Now, what are the remedies for the trouble we are in ? What will Parliament do for us, and what can we do for ourselves ? There are some things which Parliament cannot do, and which it would not do if it could. It neither can nor will give back protection in any form, however disguised. Of that we may be sure. But there are some things that are not beyond its power. It can relieve the farmer from some part of the burden of rates which he bears, which it is admitted ought to fall in some shape on personal as well as real property, and that is, I suppose, the principal help we have to look to. It may do something to equalise railway charges, which are said to be at the present time unduly favourable to long distances—that is practically the foreigner—and it may encourage a demand for land by giving facilities to buyers on a small scale. I am not myself a believer in the theory that very small farms—I mean farms of from 5 to 20 acres—in ordinary circumstances hold their own against those of larger size. Many people think otherwise. It is an experiment which on many grounds, social and political as well as economical, it may be well to try. If it succeeds, so much the better ; if not, we are only where we were. Anyhow, it is a movement really in the land-owners' interest, for if it succeeds

it brings a new class of buyers into the market, and that will tend necessarily to raise the price of land to something nearer its former value. In any case cheap transfer is desirable. Both political parties agree in that. Some say that the land-owners object to it, but I have never heard any of them do so, though whether the lawyers will let us have it remains to be seen. As to what we can do ourselves, I have no magical remedy to suggest, only the old story of patience and perseverance and mutual help. I am not going to teach farmers how to farm. Every man to his trade. It is better to stick to your own trade, and farming is not mine. I may just hint that even if we are beaten finally out of wheat-growing, it does not follow that no other crop will pay. We have a good working climate, a laborious population, an insatiable market, capital in abundance, and greater handiness in the use of machinery than any other people in the world except the Americans, a love of the land and country life among all classes ; and if with all these advantages we cannot hold our own we must be very much changed from those who have gone before us.

LXVII

HOSPITALS

ON LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE NEW LIVERPOOL ROYAL INFIRMARY,
LIVERPOOL : OCTOBER 29, 1887

I WAS asked some time ago to lay the first stone of this building, and I accepted the invitation with pleasure, for it is a good and useful work, a work of beneficence and of public spirit, and one which confers benefits upon the community far out of proportion to the capital expended or to the mere direct aid given. The common feelings of human nature will not allow us to leave any human being to die of accident or disease, if medical or surgical aid can relieve him. Nor need you have any fear of imposture. It is very possible, as we all know, to simulate poverty or distress ; it is barely possible to simulate disease, and for obvious reasons the attempt is hardly ever made. Then, again, accidents and sudden or violent illnesses are casualties of a kind which amongst the poorer classes cannot reasonably be expected to be provided against while our present society lasts—and it is not yet likely to smash up. We must always have a vast multitude of men and women who cannot pay for themselves the cost of careful medical attendance in a long sickness. They must be helped in some way, and hospital treatment is at once the least expensive and the most effective way. But there is something more to be said. It is not a paradox to affirm that the greatest guiners by the existence of hospitals are to be found among those who never enter their doors. They are schools of medical science where a young man learning his business can see in a few months more cases of disease of various kinds

than he would be likely to see in the private practice of a lifetime—where he can profit by the teaching and experience of the leading men of his profession, where a high standard of professional feeling and honour is maintained, and where greed and quackery, and all those tricks by which low practitioners sometimes try to push their way into notice, are discomfited and put down by the full force of an organised and unanimous opinion. It is no exaggeration to say that the work done and the researches made by the physicians and surgeons of the great English hospitals of this day may relieve the sufferings and prolong the lives of patients in America and Australia 100 years hence. Apart from the feelings of humanity to the individual, it is impossible to overrate the public value of such services. An unhealthy people indicates a decaying community, and the more we know of former times the more surely we become aware that with growing civilisation life becomes not only fuller, but longer. Those are the conquests of medical and sanitary science—not perhaps in popular estimate as glorious as a campaign where a hundred thousand people are killed, but possibly of more enduring service to mankind. Let me add only this—that while we justly praise the school of science of the medical profession, we must not forget that they have other claims upon us. Of all men our physicians and surgeons give the largest proportion of their time and knowledge, which is their capital, to the unpaid relief of suffering among the poor. We take that as so much a matter of course that we scarcely give them credit for it; but the fact that we do so is in itself the highest praise.

Let me only say, in conclusion, that it is a peculiar pleasure to me to take part in this ceremony; for, as you have been told, it was an ancestor of mine who laid the first stone of the Royal Infirmary, nearly 140 years ago. And it was my grandfather who, sixty-six years ago, laid the first stone of the old building which is now being replaced. I have, therefore, an hereditary interest in this work—an interest which I hope will be handed down undiminished to those who may

succeed me. There are claims of many kinds on the community of Liverpool. There is one especially for a new college building, about which I may have something to say at a future time, and in another place. But life and health are more important than even learning, and whatever else we do or leave undone, a claim which is at once that of science and humanity ought not to be postponed to any other. There is a story of a foreigner in the last century who, visiting London, looking at Greenwich and Chelsea Hospitals, and comparing them with the not very ornamental building of St. James's Palace as it was in those days, said, 'This is an odd country. Kings are lodged like beggars, and beggars are lodged like kings.' Perhaps it was a higher compliment than he meant it to be. And I hope it may be said of us that we shall nurse, lodge, and treat our humble and suffering patients with not less tenderness and not less care than if they were millionaires, and that the most costly piles of buildings in this city will be—as, indeed, even now they partly are—those which are open to every member of the community, which have been created mainly by the munificence of the rich, and which are utilised for the benefit or enjoyment of the whole of the community, and especially of the poor.

LXVIII

*THE RETENTION OF KNOWLEDGE—TECHNICAL
EDUCATION—THE VALUE AND USE OF BOOKS—
A WELL-INSTRUCTED PEOPLE*

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE UNION OF LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE INSTITUTES,
CREWE : NOVEMBER 7, 1887**

WHEN I consented to take a part in the proceedings of this meeting, I did so with reluctance, because although five-and-twenty or thirty years ago I was in the habit of speaking on educational subjects, I have done so little of late years. A good many other matters have interfered, and a change has occurred which is scarcely less than a revolution. It was to the purpose in the days I speak of to talk about the advantages of school teaching, because the large proportion of English children then did not go to any school. The question of compulsory attendance had only begun to be discussed, and if the question was raised at all, I am quite sure that the advocates of compulsion would have been in a small minority. School Boards were unheard of, rate-supported schools were unknown : now, not only are they familiar to us all, but a generation is growing into manhood which has been educated in them. You will see, therefore, what a gulf separates the present from the past, and except that I felt it would be uncourteous to decline the flattering invitation, coming from an institution connected with my own part of the country, I should have persevered in saying, what I said when first invited, ‘Leave the work of discoursing on such subjects to men who understand the ideas of the present and future rather

than to those whose connection is chiefly with the past.' Well, in the state of things with which we have to deal, a great deal of what was formerly a matter of discussion has been taken for granted. We may assume that nearly every English child gets a fair amount of primary teaching; the present difficulty is to see how children are to keep what they have acquired. You cannot bring to any practical test the question of how much what has once been known has been forgotten, but that it constitutes a large proportion of the whole no observant person can doubt. To a certain extent, I am afraid, that must be accepted as an unfortunate necessity. Of all the seeds sown only a few will germinate. That is as true in regard to mental culture as it is in regard to nature. Of men who receive an Oxford or a Cambridge education, and who have gone through what at any rate in my day was the usual classical and mathematical training, probably the majority at thirty would find their mathematics shaky; and if that is the case with those who have most leisure, and the largest general culture, we can hardly expect a better result under less favourable conditions. But in the case of those with whom we deal, whom we must presume to have been educated in Board schools or denominational schools, there are other causes operating to produce the same unsatisfactory result. Where large numbers are taught together, minute individual care is impossible, and something of a mechanical character is apt to be given to the teaching. Then there is the want of time and the consequent struggle to put more into it than is reasonably possible.

I cannot set my opinion against that of experts, and I have no doubt the Education Department knows its business best, but I am often surprised at the quantity and at the variety of knowledge which it is supposed that a child can absorb. I do not think it is strange if what is acquired hastily for the purposes of an examination often drops out as soon as the immediate purpose has been served. In my days at Cambridge there existed a rule that no man could go in for classical honours unless he had taken mathematical honours, and consequently young men without the slightest capacity for

mathematics were compelled to cram up a certain quantity of them as a necessary condition for competing in subjects which they really cared for. That rule was a mistaken one, and the Cambridge authorities abrogated it long ago. What I am told is this : that notoriously those who had so crammed up mathematical problems and theories for temporary purposes managed to forget them again in a few months or weeks, so that, except so far as that all mental exercise which is not excessive ought to be healthy, the trouble taken was pure waste, and led to no result whatever. The thing was a treadmill, and nothing else. I suspect the same thing happens with all examinations, oftener than teachers or examiners allow. Yet I am not finding fault with examinations as a test of what has been taught. They are a very imperfect test, but where you are dealing with large numbers, no other that I know of is available, and you must have some. Life would not be long enough for any inspector or examiner really to ascertain what each of some hundreds of children has learnt, and the examination papers supply an easy and convenient, if somewhat mechanical and inadequate, method of getting at a fairly accurate general result. The real mischief is due to the inadequacy of compulsory methods where the human intellect is concerned. When a parent sends a child to school only because the law compels him to do so, and when the boy learns only from necessity, and the teacher is looking primarily to the report of the inspector and the grant to be secured, it is inevitable that there should be a great waste of teaching power. I am not arguing against compulsion. In our actual state of society it is probably inevitable ; but the old saying that one volunteer is worth two pressed men is true of other things besides fighting. Those who learn only because they must will learn no more than they must, and they will very soon forget the greater part of that. Therefore, do not let us exaggerate the gain that we derive from our widespread and costly system of primary teaching. It does much—nobody will deny that ; but it leaves much undone. It ends too soon for the full effect aimed at to be accomplished ; and if there has been pressure

applied in schools, instead of a taste, there will be created an actual distaste, for books and learning generally which is not quickly or easily got over. Well, what is the remedy? I do not suppose that an absolute or complete remedy can be found; but the most obvious thing to do is to supply the necessary defect of the school course by teaching children to a later age. What should we be, we of the classes who have leisure and culture, if all the education we got ended at twelve or fourteen, and if the rest of our lives was absorbed in the struggle for a living? We cannot pretend to put lads who have to go early to work for their living on the same footing as those whose college training goes on to the age of twenty or later. The difference will always be wide, but we can do a good deal to make it less wide than it is. The Institutes of fifty years ago for the most part failed because of the want of good primary schools to feed them. We have got the schools now, and what we have to do is to provide the means of carrying on the instruction of those who are willing to learn after the time when they are clear of school, and free to follow their own devices when the day's work is over.

As to one part of your business—technical instruction—there is now only a single opinion. We are harder pressed than ever before by the competition of foreign artisans and workmen. We are fighting not for the markets of England alone, we are fighting for the markets of the world. We have held our own hitherto, but the struggle is sharper than ever, and we cannot afford to throw away any advantage which is possessed by other countries. It may be that we shall find out that we have overrated the benefit of technical teaching, that it can do less for us than we now expect; but we are at least bound to try, and to deserve success whether we get it or not. But the question of how to get a living is not the only one with which these institutions have to do. Nobody will deny that the years between fourteen and twenty are the most important years of life—those most capable of being utilised on the one hand, most likely to be wasted or abused on the other. We want to help lads and young men to spend those years

rationally and usefully. They must be doing something when their work is finished. In this part of the country and in our climate many evening hours must be spent indoors. Where will they be spent, and how? On the answer to that question the future of a life may depend.

I will not dwell in detail on what is, perhaps, the most hackneyed of all subjects of popular discussion—the value and use of books; but I say from my own experience and feeling what Lord Macaulay said many years ago in better words than I can command—that a genuine taste and love for reading is in itself a greater source of happiness than any external advantages of fortune whatever. Put it on the lowest ground, and say that a lad reads for amusement only. Well, amusement of some kind he must have; for a young man living in a town, possibly away from home and family, the choice of amusements is limited, and he will get a better sort of interest out of Walter Scott and George Eliot, and Thackeray and Trollope, not to mention older writers, than out of any cheap pleasure—probably one of the cheap and nasty sort—that is likely to be within his reach. I say that in passing; but this Society aims at far more than the promotion of harmless and respectable entertainment. It aims at continuing and extending the education of young men in the working class, and not necessarily in that only, by the same agencies which are found available in other class competitions: prizes, scholarships, lectures, exhibitions, and agents for organised concerts, and communication between institutions in various towns. What has been done, and what it is doing, will be better explained by others who will speak from personal knowledge. My conviction is that it has already become, and will become still further, a powerful instrument for the diffusion of sound and useful teaching; that it will be a help to thousands who both need and deserve help; that it will spread what is of all things most wanted and most difficult to acquire, the habit of accurate and scientific thought; and that it will give us better-

trained workmen and, more than that, better-trained citizens. We have now a stronger interest than any nation except the Americans ever had before in educating its people; for the governing class, if it chooses to use its strength, is now the most imperfectly educated class, and our House of Commons exercises a power far greater than that which belongs to any legislative body elsewhere. I say it advisedly—there is no country in the world where the direct popular vote has the same authority as now belongs to it in England; and when one thinks of the complexity of the questions dealt with, and the interests involved, so far from crying out if the democracy now and then go wrong, I am much more inclined to rejoice that they are so often right. I repeat that for us to have a well-instructed people is a question of life or death. Whatever tends to that object deserves our support, and I believe that this Society does so in a more than ordinary degree.

LXIX

*HOME RULE — AN IRISH PARLIAMENT — LOCAL
PARLIAMENTS — THE PRECEDENT OF THE
COLONIES — IRISH OPINION — COERCION — LAND
PURCHASE*

LONDON : DECEMBER 8, 1887

I CONGRATULATE you on the demonstration of this day. Whether we look at it in the point of view of numbers, of the variety of classes and sections which it represents, or of the determination and unanimity which have prevailed and now prevail with us, it is itself an answer to the often repeated fiction that the defenders of the Union are growing fewer in numbers and feebler in conviction. Exactly the contrary, in my view, is the case. There has been no appreciable loss of Parliamentary power, and that is something, for the well-recognised tendency of Parliamentary majorities, on whichever side they may be, is to diminish as time goes on, until a new election brings a fresh shuffle of the cards. The constituencies were appealed to last year, they gave a decisive answer, and there is absolutely nothing to show that when they are appealed to again their answer will not be in the same sense. There is only one real danger ahead as far as I can see. It is that the public may become so utterly wearied and disgusted with the subject that they will say, ‘Settle the Irish question anyhow—only settle it somehow, that we may hear of it no more, and have leisure to mind our own affairs.’ I think that is not a purely imaginary risk. And I see only one way of meeting it. That is, to make people clearly understand that the simple concession of an Irish Parliament would be no

settlement at all, but only the beginning of a fresh agitation quite as troublesome as that which we now have to deal with. Is there to be an Irish Parliament subject to the control of the Imperial authorities? Why, that is exactly the state of things which even in the last century Irishmen rebelled against as intolerable. Is it to deal with legislation only—that is one proposal—and not have the Executive responsible to it? Why, that is exactly the system which formerly prevailed in all our leading Colonies, and which was the subject of constant complaint till it got itself abolished. If you want to satisfy the feeling of Irish nationality, you must at least put Ireland on the footing of Canada or Australia. Those are the lowest terms. You cannot buy Irish content at a cheaper price. But that is going far beyond Mr. Gladstone's proposals of 1886, and unless you mean to go that length—which, as far as I can see, nobody does—what do you gain by a change?

I do not believe that the existing discontent will be perpetual. People very soon cease to cry out for what they know to be out of their reach. Look at the Southern States of the American Union. They are pacified; they do not mean to break out again. Were they pacified by getting all they wanted? No, but by finding out that they could not get it, and that they must go without it. Why should the Irish be harder to convince, if—and there is the question—only we in England are equally sure of our own minds? I will not rehearse at length the commonplaces of this question. If majorities have any rights, it needs no argument to prove that 33 millions have a right to overrule three millions in a matter which concerns them all. If local feelings are to be considered, Ulster has as good a claim to protest against being governed from Dublin as Dublin has to protest against being governed from London. If we have been right in thinking, as we have thought for 200 years, that Parliamentary government was the best guarantee for freedom, it surely cannot be wise to weaken the House of Commons by practically taking from it the control of the Executive in Ireland. And more, remember that what you do for Ireland you may be called upon to do,

probably for Scotland, certainly for Wales. Are you prepared for that? Are you prepared to have four local Parliaments instead of the one we know, with perhaps a Federal Council over all? That seems to me the most extraordinary and the most suicidal idea that Liberals can possibly take up. I do not suppose there are many Absolutists left among us—I mean by Absolutists people who think that the Crown ought to be the dominant and supreme power in the Constitution; but that is exactly what our Home Rule friends are leading us to. Destroy the present House of Commons, turn it into a body dealing merely with federal affairs, and what becomes of Ministerial responsibility? To whom are Ministers to be responsible? Given one supreme Executive for federal purposes, four Executives for the separate countries, and four local Parliaments, is it not perfectly clear that in all this chaos of conflicting jurisdictions there would be nowhere any body of men capable of directing and controlling national policy as the House of Commons does now? I can only hint at that difficulty, but I think that in all this controversy it has scarcely received as much attention as it deserves.

But then we are told, 'Nobody wants to meddle with the House of Commons; the local Irish Parliament which we propose is intended to be in strict subordination to it,' and the precedent of the Colonies is quoted. Now, I am almost ashamed of repeating what has been said so often before; but what possible resemblance has the case of the Colonies to that of Ireland? Parliament has a right, it is said, to overrule the decision of a Canadian or an Australian Legislature. Certainly it has—on paper—and it might do so once; but it assuredly would not have a chance of doing so twice. Our great Colonies are separated from us, one group by 3,000 miles of sea, one by 6,000 miles, one by more than 10,000 miles. Is that the case with Ireland? Notoriously, if Canada or Australia wished to leave us—I am very glad they do not, but if they did—we should not dream of retaining them by force. Will any man, even Mr. Gladstone, say the same as to Ireland? Notoriously, the colonial feeling is one, notwith-

standing occasional and passing differences, in the main of warm attachment to England. Can any man contend that that is the general feeling of the Irish people? And if all these points of difference be admitted—denied they cannot be—what is the value of this colonial precedent or parallel? Look at it another way. Our friends say they are going to give the Irish a Parliament which is to be strictly subordinate to that which sits at Westminster. Do they mean that or not? If they do mean it, can they—can anyone who reads Irish papers and listens to Irish speeches—suppose that a big vestry of that kind will be accepted by the Irish people as a settlement of their claim? And if they do not mean it—if they perfectly well know that the restrictions, the limitations of power, the appeal to the House of Commons, would all vanish into air when their reality came to be tested—is it quite fair to ask us to accept a scheme which will not and cannot work; to offer it as a settlement when they must be well assured in their own minds that it is no settlement at all—that it is only a device to induce England to make concessions which once made cannot be withdrawn, and which necessarily involve larger concessions in the immediate future? I do not know what others may think, but I at least will speak plainly. I believe that if you allow any set of men calling themselves, or being called, a Parliament, to meet in Dublin, no matter how restricted you may intend their functions to be, that body will be accepted as the only body capable of making laws that shall be binding on Ireland, and then all control from this side of the water is gone. Now, we do not mean that that shall happen if we can help it; at any rate we can make sure that it shall not happen without the English people understanding thoroughly what is proposed. The decision rests with them; but they might justly reproach us if they came to a decision without full knowledge of what they were doing, and under the influence of misrepresentations, whether intentional or not.

Now let me say one word on a part of the question with which English Home Rulers are very fond of dealing. They tell us, ‘ You have no right to govern a people except by its

own consent—you are governing Ireland by coercion, and not by consent.' I suppose we should all agree that it is very desirable that government should carry with it the good-will of the largest number possible of the governed. But when our friends lay it down as a general and indisputable law that every people, or fraction of a people, shall have the form of government it prefers, I think they are proving too much for their own purpose. Look at it this way. They disclaim, very vehemently, the name of Separatists. They are indignant at the idea that they favour separation. But suppose the majority of the Irish people desire separation? It is not at all clear to me that they do not. At all events, I should be very sorry to test it by a *plébiscite*. Would our friends defer in that case to the wish of the majority, or would they not? If they would, what becomes of their assurances to us? If they would not—they say they would not, and we are bound to take their word for it—what becomes of their principle? They are not fighting, by their own admission, for whatever the Irish people may think best, but for what they think best for the Irish people. Well, so are we. The principle of action is the same in both cases; the difference is in the application. They would not yield to an Irish demand for a separate army, a separate navy, a separate diplomacy. We think a separate Legislature just as dangerous, and that in the end it will lead to all of these. Then we come to the old plea, 'Irish opinion is all but unanimous against you.' Well, I admit that the state of Irish opinion is the strong point of the Home Rulers. They have not many strong points, and we can afford to give them one.

But there are two considerations which we ought to bear in mind. One is this—even in these democratic days you cannot assume an absolute equality of importance among all voters. We admit that Irish Home Rulers have with them a numerical majority, but it is far less than it appears from the Parliamentary representation, because our system ignores the local minority in each constituency. I believe the real

numerical proportion to be under, certainly not to be above two to one. But I cannot ignore the fact that among the minority are to be found nearly all the elements, except simple numbers, that make the greatness of a country. Lord Hartington can tell you more about that than I can ; but, after all, when you have three-fourths of the capital, of the intelligence, of the culture, of the industrial enterprise of a country on your side, that is at least something to set off against a hostile majority in the least instructed and most prejudiced class. But there is another way to look at it. Why are we to assume that what is now the case must always be the case ? Why are we to give up the Irish peasantry as irreconcilable ? Why, the changes of the last twenty years amount to a social revolution. No man, whatever he thinks of their merits, can treat them as slight or unimportant. The ascendancy of the Church was complained of, and it has been swept away ; the land system was complained of, and it has been dealt with in a spirit more favourable to the tenant than would have been shown by any Legislature in Europe ; and are we to suppose that these changes will produce no effect on popular feeling ? You may ask, ‘ Why have they produced none as yet ? ’ I answer, partly because they are lost sight of in the prospect of much larger changes ; partly because, as we all know, it takes time for a population to realise a large alteration in their condition. The sea continues to run high long after the wind which raised it has gone down, but we know that if no fresh storm springs up it will become calm in time. For my part, I refuse to believe that when every tangible grievance has been removed the dream of a separate nationality which has no historical existence will continue to influence Irish minds. We do not in England allow enough for the worship of force and success—the desire to be on the winning side, which exists, I suppose, wherever human beings are found, but which is stronger in Ireland than in most parts of the world. English support has made many Irishmen believe that Home Rule is winning, and they have rushed over to what seemed the strongest party. Let them see that they

were mistaken in their belief, and they will fall back, the great majority of them, as quickly as they came on.

There is one other point which I cannot pass over. We hear a great deal of the wickedness of coercion, by which, of course, is meant the exceptional legislation of last Session. I do not care to argue a merely personal question, and it is hardly worth while to point out—which has been done so often—that the coercive measures of 1882 were a good deal more stringent than those of 1887. That is only by the way. But when I hear coercion denounced, I am reminded of the man who, when the question of capital punishment was discussed, said, ‘I am all for doing away with the death penalty ; but let the murderers set the example.’ I suppose we all dislike needless coercion, though coercion in some form is only another name for civilisation ; but is there no other coercion than that of the law ? What about the coercion of the League ? I believe that to the bulk of the quiet and peaceable inhabitants of Ireland what is called coercive legislation has brought, and is bringing, not restraint, but freedom—freedom from the daily and nightly fear of violence ; freedom to sell to whom they please, and associate with whom they please ; freedom to dismiss a workman, or a servant, or to enforce the payment of a just debt, without danger of secret and savage revenge. Of this I am sure—no Government can allow a system of anarchy to go on, and the Government of a popular and democratic State less than any other. We are accustomed to quote the United States as the typical democracy of the world, but if in New York or New England disturbances like those of Ireland had been attempted, depend upon it they would have been put down far more roughly and summarily than they have been here.

I do not wish to weary you, and I will not add more than one word on that difficult and important question of land purchase. We have not as yet formulated any policy in regard to it, and I hope we shall not be in a hurry. The difficulties are immense. You cannot pledge English credit, because Parliament will not let you. You will not easily find

an Irish security on which money will be advanced. And even if you succeed, it is a questionable experiment to have the State for sole landlord or sole creditor, whichever you call it, and the whole body of the tenantry for debtors. Personally, I lean rather to the opinion lately expressed by Mr. Bright, and I should like to see, before trying such a gigantic operation as buying out all the landlords, whether less costly and less ambitious measures may not answer as well. My belief is that the facilities given by Lord Ashbourne's Act are likely to be taken advantage of much more than they have been, if once you can drive out of the mind of the tenant the idea which is now fixed there—that he can get the land without paying for it. Of course, till that delusion is dispelled no Act will be of any use. They will not pay for what they expect to get for nothing. When they realise the fact that we do not mean to commit robbery, or to allow it, they will come forward as buyers, and then it will be time enough, in my mind, to see what larger facilities they require. There are parts of Ireland which may require special treatment—what are called the congested districts. Well, treat them specially give your medicine to the sick, but do not force those who are not sick to take it too. It is often said by Home Rulers that we are not entitled to the name of Liberals, because we hold the opinions which the whole party held up to 1885. It seems eccentric, to say the least, to deny the name of Liberals to Mr. Bright, to Mr. Chamberlain, and to Lord Hartington. But I do not believe our Home Rule friends, whatever they may say, will try to read us out of the party. They would lose too much. They would be cutting off their noses to spite their faces. We remain what we have been from the first—an independent section, prepared to defend the Union, but abandoning no principle which we have professed. We are for free trade, for peace, for economy. We support the present Government as against Home Rule, but we support them as allies, not as colleagues. I end as I began. Our destiny is in our own hands. Once let the English public really master this question, and we are safe. It is not an accident that in

a matter which does not specially concern any class the overwhelming majority of educated Englishmen are on our side. The masses will be so too when they know the truth. It will be a sharp struggle, but it will not be a long one. We have a leader whom we trust ; we have zealous friends ; we have a good cause, and if with these advantages we do not win, the fault will be our own.

LXX

*INDUSTRIAL PROSPECTS OF THE COUNTRY—THE
NATIONAL DEBT—LOCAL GOVERNMENT—FOREIGN
AFFAIRS—FRANCE—RUSSIA—AUSTRIA*

LIVERPOOL : NOVEMBER 7, 1888

I THANK you for the kindness of the reception you have given me—a kindness of which, in this room, I have had frequent experience for more than thirty years, but which gains rather than loses in value by the lapse of time. You will expect me, I think, in returning thanks for your toast, to say a few words as to the state of affairs with which we in this year 1888 have had to deal. My opinion may be worth very little, but, at least, it is that of one who has been compelled to watch public life pretty closely for a considerable time, who has no personal interests to serve and no antipathies to gratify, and who has always tried to look at contemporary events from a national and administrative, rather than from a party, point of view.

On some former occasions I have talked to you about the industrial prospects of the country. I shall not do so now, because I believe that the despondency which it was then my object to combat has passed off, and that as regards industrial questions the public mind is exactly in that state which is most desirable—hopeful without over-confidence, and cautious without being discouraged. We have before us, in all probability, a return of better times, but what it now most concerns us to remember is the presence of two dangers which we must face, which we cannot escape by ignoring, and which it will need all our care to guard against. One is that of a constant

growth of population at a rate more rapid than that of the corresponding increase of capital ; the other is the competition to which in the markets of the world we are exposed—a competition in many cases actually fed and stimulated by English capital, a competition in which victory rests with the race which can work most effectively, and produce most cheaply. Asia is in the field as well as Europe—Oriental frugality and docility, backed up by European capital ; and though I believe we shall hold our own in the long run, I believe also that we shall be harder put to it than we have ever yet been. And for us the struggle is one of life or death. We have made for ourselves a great and peculiar position. We cannot now return to the simple existence of a merely agricultural country. We are bound to go on, or to collapse.

Turning to another subject, you will, I am sure, understand that if I speak at all in this room of Parliamentary proceedings, I must do so in the most guarded and colourless manner ; but there are very few here or anywhere who will not have seen with pleasure that the House of Commons appears to have in a great measure recovered that efficiency for active purposes which during the last few years has been somewhat impaired, and as nobody is interested in a wasted Session, or in administrative failure, I think we may all congratulate ourselves on the passing of two measures which it is no exaggeration to describe as of first-rate importance. Luck and skill co-operated to make possible the reduction of interest on the debt ; and I may observe in passing that no one more generously acknowledged the success of Mr. Goschen in that respect than his predecessor, Mr. Childers, whose own attempts in the same direction were baffled by the then state of the financial world.

One word on that question of debt. It is a great thing to have saved the interest—nearly a million and a half now, nearly three millions in a few years' time—but I earnestly hope that what is so saved may be applied, if not wholly, at least for the greater part, not in the reduction of taxes, which, on the whole and compared with our resources, are now

probably about the lightest in Europe, nor in the extension of armaments, which are certainly costly enough, but in accelerating the operations of that process by which in some forty or fifty years' time we may hope to have shaken off altogether our heavy inherited burden of indebtedness.

As to the other great measure of the year, the Local Government Act, it had the good fortune to be accepted with little reservation by both parties, which is the best proof that it was felt to be a necessity. Whether it will work well or badly depends upon those who administer it. We are, of course, prepared for higher rates, but I sincerely trust that we shall continue to make a stand against the accumulation of local debt. That is pretty well guarded against at present, but I think I see in the not distant future that pressure will be applied to lessen the efficiency of those safeguards. And one thing more. I do not know if it be too sanguine an anticipation, but I hope that we, the county electors, will vote for men, and not exclusively for flags and colours. If every election is to be a party wrangle, the only winner in the long run will be that remarkably unpleasant animal known to modern politics as the 'carpet bagger.' I trust we may keep him out. Choose squires, choose men in business, choose farmers, choose working men if you find any who are fit and willing, but choose men who have something to lose by maladministration, and who will not start from the theory that squandering the public money is good because it increases the demand for labour. Some people complain that the new County Councils have not power enough. If that is a mistake, it is one on the safe side. You can always extend the functions of an administrative body ; you cannot easily curtail them ; and, apart from that, I am not sure that it is wise to accumulate a great variety of powers in the hands of one set of persons. Some men interest themselves in education, some in county finance, some in poor-law administration, and there is a good deal to be said in favour of leaving each kind of business to those who feel themselves naturally drawn to it. However, that is a very fair matter for future discussion. Nothing that

Parliament has done in regard to it is final, and experience will help us to feel our way.

So much for our home affairs ; but there are affairs of another sort that force themselves on our notice whether we will or no. It is difficult to judge how far our industry and prosperity at home have been affected by the fear of foreign complications. Perhaps familiarity makes the risk to be un-felt, but the uncertainty whether Europe will remain at peace or not has been, is, and must be a disturbing element in all our calculations. Of course, on such subjects, I speak only as an observer from the outside ; but where the future is concerned exclusive information does not go for much, and sometimes the old saying is true that on-lookers see most of the game. In my judgment the prospects of continued peace are less unfavourable than it is the fashion of the moment to suppose. There are four great nations, or rather Governments, any one of which can bring about a war if it chooses. Take them in turn. The first is France. Now, I firmly believe that, whatever vague hopes of recovering the lost provinces at some future day may be entertained, there is no considerable party of Frenchmen which at present desires war. Honest, sincere Republicans wish the Republic consolidated, and they have no desire to see a successful general play the old Bonaparte game again. The persons whose votes must decide the question certainly do not want a heavier conscription and increased taxes. The two extremes—the ultra-Monarchists on the one side, and the Anarchists on the other—may, and probably many of them do, wish for general confusion ; but they are only a fraction of the people. I am, I will not say certain, but as confident as it is ever reasonable to be, that neither the French Government nor the French masses will knowingly take or support any step that may provoke an international quarrel ; although they may wish to make themselves respected in Europe, and though, with that object in view, they may indulge in a military expenditure which even their wonderful frugality and industry must feel to be a heavy burden.

Then look to Russia. In Russia, as we know, nearly everything turns on the will of one man. There is no rival power or influence to be set against that of the Emperor. Now, I have conversed with various persons—diplomatic friends and others—who can speak with some authority as to the character of the Russian Emperor. His personal tastes and aptitude are not military. That, I believe, is certain. He is perfectly well aware that a war, no matter with whom, is the wish of the Revolutionary party, because they believe that the sufferings and sacrifices, and the political excitement which follow on war, will all make in their interest. He would be playing the game of his worst enemies if he allowed himself to be drawn into a quarrel. He is quite aware of the difficulties in which his Empire is placed by a corrupt administration and by bad finance ; and, short of some personal or national affront, to which no doubt he would be sensitive, it is utterly improbable that he will be the man to set Europe on fire.

As to Austria I need not speak. Austrian statesmen have before them a task of enormous difficulty in keeping that heterogeneous and ill-compacted Empire from tumbling to pieces. They would much rather, I fancy, make no move, and if they move at all, they will of necessity take their lead from Berlin.

Then there is Germany. No doubt the presence there of a young, energetic sovereign, whose tastes and training are all military, is a circumstance to be taken into consideration. I can imagine that the young German Emperor might look on a war into which he might suppose himself to be forced, and which he would direct, as not the greatest of possible misfortunes. But there is one consideration to be borne in mind. What should he fight for ? Military superiority Germany has got already. No German desires to annex more French territory, and every colony which Germany is trying to create beyond the seas is a pledge for peace at home.

The danger which I see, and I do not wish to make less of it than the facts of the case justify, is twofold. In the first place, you have got now all over the Continent an enormous body of men to whom the continuance of peace means com-

parative poverty and obscurity, and whose only hope of distinction lies in war. I suppose, if you take the great military empires of Europe, the collective aggregate of their officers must amount to several hundred thousand ; men mostly well educated and naturally anxious for action. That is a force with which we have to reckon, and whose interest will be mainly against us. It is said that universal military service has, so far, a peaceful effect ; that by it the masses have brought home to them a sense of the sacrifices which they make. That is true, probably, of the men, but it does not apply to the gigantic permanent staff of which I have been speaking. Another danger is of a different kind. Peace may be risked by the very impatience shown to secure it. Suppose any Power, exhausted by the cost of military preparation, to call imperatively for general disarmament. Nothing could be more natural or seem more legitimate, but nothing could be more likely to bring about an immediate collision. We, of course, can have only one interest and one feeling. I trust we shall keep out of all entanglements in which our straightforward simplicity of conduct would be inevitably taken advantage of, and that we shall do what we can to pour cold water on those great masses of combustible material which are heaped up on every side. The nation, luckily, is not in a blustering mood, and we have quite enough to do with our own troubles at home.

LXXI

EMIGRATION

LIVERPOOL: JANUARY 21, 1889

I HAVE come here to plead in favour of a society which has for its object the promotion of emigration, or perhaps I should rather say the securing of emigrants against many of the dangers and abuses to which they are exposed. For emigrants there will be, whether this society exists or not, and emigration must be accepted as one of the recognised institutions of this country. I will not waste words by pointing out what is clear enough—that for a nation situated as we are an outflow of population is an absolute necessity. No doubt we have a national capital always increasing; no doubt the volume of our trading and manufacturing business continues to grow, if not from year to year, at least from decade to decade; no doubt we have some uncultivated lands at home, though for the most part they are poor lands, and not such as could be profitably cultivated at the present prices of food. But, on the other hand, we have a yearly growth of population of little less than 400,000; and, although industrial production is constantly on the increase, labour-saving machinery reduces the number of hands employed, and there is in the present, and is still more likely to be in the future, a considerable supply of labour for which no demand exists.

Those are, in brief, the facts of the case; and here let me guard myself against being supposed to consider emigration as an adequate remedy for the dangers ahead. I do not think so; I never have thought so. But, though it may not be a cure, it is at least a palliative. It lessens impatience by

lessening suffering, and it gives time to deal with our troubles before they thicken upon us. There are, I think, some people who still object to it on principle, and that for various reasons. A very few perhaps cling to the notion that the fighting power of a State depends upon its population, and that the fighting power of a State is the chief thing to look to. I do not agree with either of these propositions, but they are hardly important enough in their influence on present opinion to be worth discussion. Some people, again, are afraid of making labour too dear, ignoring the fact that ill-paid labourers do not always, or generally, mean cheap labour; because, if you put very little into a man, you will, as a rule, get very little out of him. Some men, I am afraid, do not like the open safety-valve. They wish, if not exactly for an explosion, yet for such high pressure as will always give agitation a motive power. Neither of these last considerations is likely to be publicly avowed, but many motives influence action which do not find vent in speech; and no doubt there are some benevolent people who hold that if their own particular cure for the evils of society were adopted England could maintain double or treble its present population with ease and without distress. Teetotalers and vegetarians, amongst others, are generally credited with that notion. Many socialists think the same. Well, I am not going to wrangle with those gentlemen. I only say to them, 'You may be right, but you have not converted the world yet. When you have, we will see what your remedies are worth. Meanwhile, let us try and deal with men as they are, and with society as it exists.'

What is there to say on the other side? In the first place, this—that if the current of emigration were suddenly changed, you would very soon find the result in the growth of pauperism. In the next place, every successful emigrant (and with reasonable care nine out of ten ought to succeed) not only leaves his place at home vacant for some one else to fill, but makes work for those whom he has left behind. He was a pauper, or next door to one; he becomes a customer. Let colonists do what they will in the way of protectionist tariffs—I am sorry they

do it, but they are their own masters—England will for many years to come be the chief source of supply for manufactures of whatever kind. And there is more than that. Though we may not want to see the whole globe Anglicised, though we do not want the entire human race to be a reproduction of the English middle class, for that would be a little monotonous, still we may be legitimately glad, and even proud, to think that the race to which we belong will not be crowded out of existence, but will hold its own in the most distant parts of the globe. The settlement of a new country is, after all, the only permanent form of conquest, and it is a kind of conquest that involves injury to no man.

I say, then, that, assuming the right place and the right men to be chosen, emigration is good for those who go and for those who stay behind. As to the place, there are practically only three alternatives. Tropical colonies are out of the question if a man is to live by the work of his hands. South Africa has an admirable climate and plenty of land to spare; but black men and white men do not always get on comfortably together, and the large Dutch and native admixture does not suit every settler. Australia has every advantage for those who do not dislike a somewhat hot and dry climate; the distance is the chief objection. But where the cost of transport has to be considered Canada is most likely to be chosen; and Canada, of course, includes the possibility for the emigrant, if he is not content with his prospects, of moving south and trying his fortune in the United States. And it is in Canada, accordingly, that most of those who go out from these parts are apt to settle. Now as to the sort of men who should go. The farm labourer, the unemployed artisan, and, generally, everyone who has the use of a pair of strong arms and the will to use them, is safe enough. He will not make his position worse, and he is almost sure to make it better. The well-paid artisan should be more careful. He may find that nominally higher wages are balanced by larger necessary outlay, and he ought to inquire carefully before he breaks with his old connections. As to the class of young

men of higher education it is difficult to advise. They may not mind roughing it, but the necessary absence of intellectual pursuits and congenial society are heavy drawbacks. Many such, I fancy, go out who might have done as well at home if they had been willing to live the same sort of life and do the same sort of work that is forced upon them in the Colonies. I do not discourage them, but I say that the sacrifice imposed upon them is heavier than that made by young men who have been differently trained. Even a freehold farm and an abundance of plain food may be bought too dear. The three main requisites for a successful colonist are these—he should be young, poor, and energetic. The last is the most important of the three. Let no man think of going out who is not prepared to do a hard day's work. Colonial employers give ample wages, but they expect good work in return. There is no room for that rather large class, with whom we are familiar at home, who go about asking for work, but hoping that they will not find it—whose chief employment, in fact, consists in being one of the unemployed.

That remark leads me to what is the chief difficulty of the emigration question. I mean the danger of exciting colonial jealousy by pouring in too many emigrants, or emigrants of an unsuitable kind. In every self-governed colony, as we know, the working classes are masters, and laws are mainly formed to suit their convenience. It cannot be otherwise. Now, their obvious interest, at least for the moment, is not to admit too many competitors for employment. They have got a good thing in the shape of high wages, and they mean to stick to it. I have no hesitation in saying that, if any scheme were started with the help of the State, such as benevolent persons often suggest, which should pour, say 100,000 settlers yearly into Australia or Canada, that proposal would be met by legislation of some kind in the colony affected with the view of checking an influx of population larger than could be easily absorbed; and, of course, the cry would be louder if among so large a number there were found, as almost inevitably must happen, a certain proportion of paupers,

loafers, and bad characters. We have to be extremely careful not to irritate the colonial susceptibility on that point. The colonist will only take our best men, and he does not want too many of them. The existence of that feeling, to my mind, is conclusive against great and ambitious schemes of colonisation. It is also a strong reason for taking all possible precautions that the emigrant on landing shall know where to go to find employment at once. If he is seen loafing about helplessly, although only for a few days, immediately the cry will be raised, 'England is at her old game, dumping down her paupers here.'

Now, the society on behalf of which I am speaking takes special care to avoid that danger. It keeps up communication with the Colonies, so that the emigrant when he lands finds himself at once amongst friends. It advances him part of the cost of his passage, and it is said that in many cases the loan is repaid. My experience of loans would not lead me to be sanguine on that score, but I defer to the opinion of those who ought to know best. But the main benefit which it confers is this. Besides help in money, it tells the intending emigrant—who generally knows as much about the Colonies as he does about the moon—where he had better go, what he must take with him, and to whom he is to address himself, and so he is saved from that unpleasant and bewildering sensation, unpleasant even to educated people, and far worse to the ignorant and simple, of being on a continent where he knows nobody, where nobody knows him, and where he is liable to have his ignorance taken advantage of in various ways. Emigration must always be a wrench. It involves a lifelong parting of families, and a separation from old friends and old associations. But the suffering may be diminished if the emigrant finds on the other side a warm welcome, and the assurance that a place is ready for him. Those wants the society on behalf of which I am speaking can supply, and will supply, but upon one condition—that you in your turn will supply its wants, and will help it to get fairly started on its way.

I hardly know whether it is worth while to discuss the objection that what we want is home colonisation—the settling of people on unoccupied lands—rather than emigration beyond seas. In the first place, there is room for both, for one does not exclude the other. Let every man ride his own hobby as long as he does not try to ride over his neighbour. In the next place, schemes of what is called ‘home colonisation’ are various, but not, in general, promising. One of the favourite ideas of their promoters is to take the people who have failed in other occupations and to plant them on land which professional farmers have not been able to utilise. The least effective part of the population is to be put on the least productive part of the soil. I am not sanguine as to the success of projects of that kind, though, as a land-owner, I am glad of anything that increases the demand for land. But if a man can get a hundred acres in Canada for less than he would have to pay for ten acres here, I think he had better move. I believe that emigration, guided and directed as it is in the case of this society, is at least a partial remedy for existing difficulties. If any one has a better plan, let him pursue it; if not, let him help us.

LXXII

*HOME RULE—THE LIBERAL UNIONIST PARTY—
LOCAL INDEPENDENCE—TENDENCIES OF AN
IRISH PARLIAMENT—THE RELATIONS OF ENG-
LAND AND IRELAND—HOME RULE FALLACIES
—THE UNION—THE POLICY OF THE UNIONISTS*

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE : JANUARY 23, 1889

I AM honoured by your invitation, and grateful for your reception ; but honoured and grateful as I am, I claim some merit for coming here, for you have asked me to speak to you on the Irish question, and no sense of the importance of the issue can destroy the feeling that to speak upon Home Rule is to travel over very familiar ground, and to enforce arguments which many of you must have heard quite often enough. Still, you have asked me, I have accepted, and I will do what is possible. I begin by noticing one fallacy which is constantly repeated, and not perhaps as often refuted as it might be. We who stand here as Liberal Unionists are perpetually spoken of by our present opponents as men who have seceded from the Liberal cause—who dislike reforms which would hurt us personally or as a class, and who have taken advantage of a plausible pretext to leave the Liberal camp. That kind of talk is wholly absurd when applied to men like Mr. Chamberlain and others whom I could name, to whom, by the very constitution of their minds, it would be impossible to see public affairs except from a democratic point of view. But I do not dwell upon the personal question. I say that we have objected to the Home Rule proposal because we are Liberals—that we dislike it, not as an extreme and revolu-

tionary measure, but as a reactionary measure; and that the main stream of Liberal opinion throughout the world is with us, who want to keep these two islands together—not with those who desire, wholly or partially, to disunite them.

Let me explain what I mean. The struggle between the central power on the one hand, and local independence on the other, is not confined to our own country. It goes on, more or less, everywhere. Look at Italy as one example. You have in Italy States and provinces which, for antiquity, fame, and the part which they have played in history, are certainly more entitled to separate national existence than any part of Ireland. Milan, Genoa, Venice, Florence, Naples, are at any rate not inferior to Dublin; but ask any Italian what he has to say to a proposal to establish a federal system in Italy, with Home Rule for each of those great cities, which formerly, remember, were great States. Why, he would laugh in your face. He would tell you, 'My good friend, whether you know it or not, you are proposing exactly what the Pope, and the Cardinals, and the supporters of the old *régime* would like best. Under a Constitution such as you suggest there would very soon be an end of united Italy. We, who are Liberals and Italians, shall resist it to the death.' Take Germany. You will find that what every Liberal there desires is gradually and cautiously to lessen the power of the several States, and to increase that of the Imperial authorities. The supporters of the opposite view are invariably, as I believe, members of the Conservative, or even of the retrograde, section. Take Switzerland. In the little civil war which went on there some forty years ago, the Liberals were for the central authority; the Clericals were on the side of the resisting cantons which stood on the ground of their separate State rights. Take America. On the one great political issue with which the United States have had to deal during their century of existence, the supporters of State rights were also the supporters of negro slavery, and the opponents of State rights were the authors of emancipation. In France, with its

centralised administration, the question has scarcely arisen, but it was once raised in the midst of the great revolution of ninety years ago, when one party—the Girondins—was accused of desiring to substitute the federal system for the existing unity. The charge was probably unfounded, but so far was it from being thought to be connected with progressive or Liberal ideas that it contributed not a little to destroy the political leaders against whom it was made. The party lost power, and the chiefs lost their heads. I will not multiply examples, but I lay it down, and I challenge Home Rulers to show the contrary, that as a rule throughout the civilised world in modern times, wherever, in any country, the attempt has been made to weaken the central power of the State in order to strengthen that of some particular province, the progressive party has been found on the opposing side.

If you think this argument too theoretical, take the particular case before us. We cannot, of course, predict infallibly what the tendencies of an Irish Parliament would be in all respects, but of some of them we may be absolutely certain. I have never found anyone who denied that one of the strongest desires of the Irish National party was to encourage their home industries by protective duties. I have never heard it questioned that an Irish Parliament elected by popular constituencies would on most questions—I do not say on all, but especially where education and social life were concerned—be mainly in the hands of the Catholic priests. That may not be the feeling of the leaders, but it would be the feeling of the masses. On those two points, if evidence were wanted, I might call as witnesses the authors of the Bill of 1886; for they proposed expressly to debar the Irish Parliament from the right either of imposing customs duties or of endowing any religious body. It would be easy to show that the safeguard proposed in each case would have been purely illusory, but that is not my present object. I mention that fact in order to show that, in the view of Mr. Gladstone and his then colleagues, the danger was one to be guarded against, for if there were no real danger, why impose what must necessarily

be an unpopular restriction ? Then there are questions of foreign policy. Is it certain or probable that Irish and English ideas will be the same on these questions ? Suppose we had had an Irish Parliament thirty years ago, when Garibaldi was the hero of the hour and all English Liberals talked enthusiastically about Italian liberation, do you think the Irish Parliament would not have tried to make its influence felt in an opposite direction, and to save the temporal power of the Pope ? It is as certain as anything in politics can be that the Irish ideas which we Liberal Unionists are censured for not accepting will include in commerce, protection ; in regard to education and social questions, clericalism pushed to the utmost ; in foreign affairs, an Ultramontane policy. Are any of those ideas part of the Liberal programme, or is it in the interests of Liberalism, as the word is commonly understood, that they should prevail ?

From measures pass to men—to the leaders of opinion and action in Ireland. Of them we have some materials for judging. We know what the Irish members in the House of Commons are. They have the strongest inducement to conduct themselves courteously and temperately there ; for they are on their good behaviour ; they represent their country and their cause in English eyes ; and they are quite acute enough to know how powerful an argument for Irish self-government it would be if they could be pointed to as men worthy to legislate for and to administer an important State. But what do we find ? They vary, no doubt. Dr. Tanner and some others whom I could name may not be quite fair samples ; but take the most active and eloquent among them, are they exactly the sort of people on whose judgment we should like implicitly to rely ? I do not denounce them or criticise them, but if anyone were to say that they are peculiar products of an imperfect civilisation his description would not err on the side of severity. What reason have we to suppose that Irishmen elected to serve at Dublin will show higher or better qualities than those elected to serve at Westminster ? Here they are

restrained to a certain extent by English opinion—alien opinion, they would call it—at home they will create opinion. Is the opinion they will create likely to be of a healthy or civilised kind? You can answer that question for yourselves.

I will not go again over that often-trodden ground of the equal impossibility of admitting the Irish members to an English Parliament, or of excluding them from it, if Ireland is to have a Legislature of its own. If you exclude them, Ireland becomes a mere dependency of England on all foreign or Imperial questions; if you include them, which is the present proposal, you must do that which Mr. Gladstone declared less than three years ago to be impracticable—you must draw a line of distinction between English and Imperial questions, besides other inconveniences which would be fatal to good administration and to the working of Parliamentary government. I will not pursue that argument, because I dwelt upon it just a month ago before another audience, and, though we have had various speeches on the Home Rule side since then, I have not seen any answer even attempted. My conviction is—and I speak of it not as a thing probable, but as a thing certain—that if unhappily the English people determined on giving Ireland a Legislature of its own, there would be no rest, no halting-place, until the Parliament of Dublin was invested with all the powers of the Parliament of Westminster. No doubt that would not mean formal separation, the Queen would still be sovereign in Ireland, but practically it would be separation, for, under Parliamentary government, the Crown can only act on Ministerial advice, and the Minister can only advise the policy which is advocated or supported by Parliament.

I know what is said on the other side. We are told there may be difficulties in the relations of the two countries, but at least they will be reconciled; gratitude will smooth the way and make all easy! That is a fine topic for those who are given to gush. Well, I am not so cynical as to dispute the efficacy of gratitude as a motive power where

individuals are concerned, but I do not think it exercises much influence over nations. What is more, I do not think it ought. Statesmen are trustees for the nation they serve, and they have no more right to compromise the national interest, or what they consider such, in order to gratify their own feelings, than they would have to give away in charity an estate which they held in trust. Any way, the fact is as I state. Instances are innumerable, but one is enough. Look at the present relations between France and Italy. They are hardly amicable—certainly not cordial. Everybody knows that but for the armed intervention of France thirty years ago a united Italy would not have been created, yet at this moment if a European war broke out, it is more likely than not that Italy would range herself on the side opposed to that taken by France. How would it be with Ireland? That a semi-independent Ireland will waive all further claims in deference and in compliment to us is a wild expectation. The more probable result would be that an Irish Executive would watch for the first opportunity when we were in serious trouble, and then ask for complete freedom. In fact, that is exactly what they did more than a hundred years ago. Ireland had then a Parliament with limited powers. Ireland wanted those powers extended, and the opportunity was seized, when English strength and military resources were well-nigh exhausted by the American war, to enforce her claim by creating an army of Irish Volunteers to which nothing at that moment could have been opposed.

Many people look to the American precedent, and ask why Ireland should not be placed, as regards us, in the position of a State in the American Union. That is a plausible suggestion, but it will not bear looking into. The fact is that federal union between two countries of very unequal importance is a practical impossibility. Federation is possible—it is even easy—between several States of which no one is powerful when compared to the whole. No one in New York, or Virginia, or California can reasonably feel aggrieved because wishes which prevail in his own State are overruled by a majority amongst

the sixty millions of people and the thirty-eight States which form the American Union. But where you have only two communities to deal with, the case is different. There is no third party to mediate. Supposing them to pull different ways, either one must give way to the other, or they must split. A split is, of course, impossible in the Irish case. It is equally out of the question that thirty-three or thirty-four millions of people should follow the lead of less than five millions. The only possible meaning, therefore, that federation can have for the Irish is independence. They are, under the present system, our equals in all respects; they would become our subordinates. They are actually citizens of a great State, with the fullest rights that other citizens possess; they are asked, or they ask for themselves, to become citizens of a small State depending in all external matters on one more powerful. It will not be easy for them, or for their friends, to show that the change is for their own advantage.

Now, there are one or two fallacies which are constantly reappearing in this controversy, and which one ought not to pass by. The staple of Home Rule speeches is this—‘What right have you to govern Ireland against the wish of the Irish people?’ Well, if you take your stand on a principle, you must not shrink from the conclusion to which it leads you. The principle laid down means one of two things. Either it means that any and every fraction of a country has a right to claim self-government and virtual independence, which is a proposition too absurd to be seriously discussed, or it implies that Ireland has some special claim to be treated as a separate nationality, which does not belong to any other part of the British Isles. Now let us see what Irish nationality from the historical point of view comes to. We know pretty well what Ireland was before the English conquest. It was at no time a country subject to one Government, or organised in any civilised fashion. It was an island inhabited by a multitude of half-savage tribes incessantly at war with one another, and never for more than a few years under even the nominal control of a single head. It is literally, historically true that

Ireland has never been, in any recognised sense of the word, a nation, except as an English dependency. You hear a great deal about Grattan's Parliament—the Irish Parliament that existed from 1782 to 1801, and of which I spoke just now. Well, that Parliament is a curious one for Celtic patriots to appeal to. It was a Parliament composed entirely of Protestants, no Catholics sat in it. It passed, I believe, fifty-four distinct Acts of the kind now called Coercion Acts. It began in one revolution—for the Volunteer movement of '82 was really a revolution, though no blood was shed—and it ended after the putting down of an insurrection which cost thousands of lives, and which has left bitter memories to this day. It would be as reasonable for the negro of the Southern States of America to identify himself with the white planters and slave-owners who were in power there before the War of Secession, as for the Celtic peasant to profess sympathy with or regret for the Irish Parliament of the last century. And, as a fact, I do not believe that it was regretted by the mass of the Irish people.

Irish history is fertile in fiction, but even in Irish history no transaction has been so unceasingly misrepresented as that of the Union. It is described as having been carried by a mixture of force and corruption. The fact is that it was naturally and vehemently opposed in Ireland by the governing classes, who had a monopoly of power and wanted to keep it, but that it was unpopular with the nation there is no proof whatever. If the wise counsels of Pitt had prevailed, if the emancipation of the Catholics had gone hand in hand with the transfer of legislative power, it would have been accepted as a benefit. The misfortune and the fault was allowing that necessary measure of conciliation to be delayed for a quarter of a century, and to be carried at last only out of fear lest a civil war should break out. It was a right act when done, but it was done too late, and done with wrong motives assigned. You hear a great deal of bribery being employed to carry the Act of Union. Well, there was always plenty of jobbing in Irish politics, and never probably was it worse than in

Grattan's Parliament; and I do not doubt that a good many patriots jumped at the opportunity of feathering their nests at the public expense. Perhaps there are a few who would do the same thing now. But the transaction which is most often referred to—I mean the million and a quarter voted for buying up the rotten boroughs—was not a case of bribery at all. Many of the seats in the Irish Parliament were what in those days were called pocket boroughs—that is, they were absolutely in the hands of one, or two, or three, or half a dozen men. Of course, that was an abuse, but it was an abuse which had grown up in course of time, which existed equally in England, which the public had always tolerated ; and when these pocket boroughs were swept away their owners were compensated for the loss of what had come to be considered as property. Whether that were right or wrong, it is a fact that a large part of the compensation money—I believe over a third of the whole—went to persons who opposed and resisted the Union to the last. You can hardly have clearer evidence that there was no bribery in the case : you do not pay a man a bribe when you know he is voting against you.

I should not trouble you with all this ancient history now if so much were not made of it by the other side. For my own part, I do not think that the question how the Union was carried is a very material one. Many acts have been done in public life which it would be impossible to defend on the score of justice, but of which the remote consequences have been of benefit to mankind. To take only one instance, we may think—most of us do think—our Indian Empire a benefit to those whom we govern ; but we need not, therefore, justify all the acts of Clive and Hastings, by whom mainly that Empire was acquired. There is a more practical question to consider. What have the results of the Union been ? What is the state of Ireland compared with what it was ninety years ago ? Now, on that point we can give a certain and positive answer. In regard to health and comfort and education, and all material advantages, the progress of Ireland has been rapid and remarkable. I could give statistical proof of that in

plenty, but statistics are a weariness, and the fact, I suppose, is not disputed. No doubt the population has not increased, and for the same reason which has caused it to diminish in the purely agricultural districts of England. Men go where there is work to be got, and that is mainly in the towns. Ireland has no coal, and therefore has very few manufactures ; but nobody denies that the Irish masses, however poor they may still be, according to our standard, are living under conditions which they would have thought luxurious fifty years ago ; and that connects itself with another question not, perhaps, as often touched upon by speakers on this subject as it might be.

What are the grievances for which we are asked to provide so very sweeping a remedy as a complete change in our Constitution ? I have read most of the speeches that have been delivered by those who may be called representative men, and I have not got much light on this subject. I find a good deal of declamation, but very little argument. A stranger who should hear of this controversy for the first time would naturally say to the Irish representatives, ‘I suppose you have some complaints which the Parliament at Westminster will not listen to, and for which you are afraid you will never get a hearing, except through a Parliament of your own.’ Now, to that I should like to know what the Irish answer would be. The Protestant Church, which used to be foremost in the list of grievances, is disestablished and disendowed ; the land question has been dealt with in a spirit of even extreme liberality to the tenant, for nobody who knows anything about land will deny that rents as fixed by the Land Commissioners are exceedingly low. If more freedom of local government is asked for, that would notoriously have been granted long ago if the question had not been complicated by the larger issues now raised, and it will be granted when the present agitation has subsided. If admission to public employment is in question, Ireland enjoys not merely equality, but favour, for if an Englishman were by chance appointed to any local office in Ireland, there would be a howl of indignation, whereas nobody

thinks of complaining because an Irishman is similarly employed in England. And let me just say, in passing, that this cry of 'Ireland for the Irish, Scotland for the Scotch, Wales for the Welsh,' is a dangerous one to raise. Nobody has yet cared to meet it by a counter-demand of 'England for the English,' and I hope we shall not do so; but if that reply were provoked, and took a practical form, I do not think the minor nationalities would be the gainers.

There is another question, again, which our Home Rule friends are not fond of grappling with. If we are to govern Ireland according to the wish of the Irish people, must we not first find out what that wish is? I am not here to deny that a considerable numerical majority are ready to vote for something which they call Home Rule. That is certain, but how many of those have any definite ideas of what they want? Ask a peasant, and he would probably tell you frankly that he wants Ireland to be independent. Ask a priest, and if you get a plain answer from him, which you probably would not, he would tell you that he meant the supremacy of the Catholic religion. Ask a tenant farmer, and he would say that he wanted to hold his farm without paying rent for it; we know the phrase, 'prairie value,' which is an ingenious euphemism for no value at all. But if Home Rule were explained to them as English Home Rulers explain it, that nothing more is intended than a Parliament which should after all be liable to be overridden in case of need by the Parliament at Westminster, are you sure that a majority of the Irish nation would care to vote for that? If they did, it could only be in the expectation that things would not end there, and that in the long run they would get all they wished for, and one-third of Ireland, that part which is thoroughly loyal and well-affected, would feel itself sacrificed, and be irritated and exasperated beyond measure. You would be disgusting one-third of the people in order to disappoint the other two-thirds.

Then we are pressed with another argument, which I know has weight with many people—what I call the argument from despair. They say—people have said it to me—'Yes, it is a

bad job ; we do not deny that very likely inconveniences which you expect from repeal of the Union will follow, but what choice have we ? What is the alternative ? We cannot go on fighting and quarrelling as we are doing now.' Now, I admit there is a certain force in that contention, but I think there is an answer to it. Look to the United States. In the last generation Liberal speakers were never tired, in any question to which precedents could be made to apply, of quoting the precedent of America. It is a curious sign of the times that Conservative speakers do so now, and perhaps rather more of the two. Well, look, I say, to the United States. They had a great and sanguinary civil war not thirty years ago. Whether the Irish patriots are in earnest or not, there is no doubt the patriots of the Southern States were desperately in earnest. Whatever we may think of their cause, they fought like men. Seldom was a more unequal struggle so long protracted. They were beaten ; they were compelled to submit. Many people thought—I am not ashamed to say that I was one of them—that, conquered as the Southerners might be, and incapable of resisting force by force, they would long continue irreconcilable, and that they would be a permanent trouble and danger to their conquerors. What happened ? Why, they accepted the situation, they submitted to the Union, and no Southerner now dreams of the renewal of a secession movement.

Well, why should not the followers of Mr. Parnell, or rather the followers of Mr. Dillon, Mr. O'Brien, and Mr. Davitt—for outside Parliament they are the real movers—show as much sense as the followers of Jefferson Davis and of Lee ? There is only one thing necessary, and that is that they should know the decision of this country to be final, and recognise the fact that their cause is lost. We all reconcile ourselves, a little sooner or a little later, to what we know to be inevitable. This agitation will live so long as we in England and Scotland hold out hopes of its success. If we make up our minds to resist it we shall find that it has very little vitality.

Recollect, again, the precedent of Scotland. The Scotch, when they united with us, had really much to sacrifice. They had maintained their independence, which Ireland never did. They had enjoyed for centuries an organised Government and a recognised nationality. Their statesmen saw the advantages of union with England, but among the masses through nearly the whole of the last century it was quite as unpopular as the Irish Union is in Ireland. Yet no Scotchman now, except a handful of Celtic enthusiasts in the Highlands, wants a separate Parliament for Scotland. What has reconciled them? Only fair treatment, the lapse of time, and the conviction that what was done so long ago cannot now be undone. Why is that which happened in Scotland impossible to the Irish? They cannot be more tenaciously patriotic. We all know what a Scotchman is in that respect. They may have less political wisdom and judgment, but that is a plea which will hardly be put forward by their friends.

Now, I may be asked a question. I may be told, 'You have objected to one policy, but you have not offered one instead: you have not told us what you would do.' Well, in the first place, I would do what is being done now, enforce the law steadily, firmly, and calmly. Do not believe what people tell you when they say that that is not democratic doctrine. Anarchy is not democracy. Anarchy is the negation of democracy. Anarchy and despotism have a good deal in common, for both rest on force, but democratic communities affirm as their leading principle respect for the will of the majority embodied in the law. And with our franchise such as it is now, no man can seriously contend that the views of Parliament are not the views of the people. Of this I am sure—that in no country in the world would as much toleration have been shown for men who openly announce their intention of defying the law as has been shown in Ireland. Republican France, Republican America, would have made very short work of men whose excesses we have treated till lately with almost contemptuous indifference. Then we are told that the enforcement of the law is coercion, and that is a name so

horrible that merely to mention it is condemnation enough. Well, I hope we have too much sense in these parts to be governed by phrases and frightened by nicknames. What does coercion mean? It means that people are coerced to obey the law; and so they must be everywhere and always, if civilisation is to exist at all. Wherever you have a court of law to appeal to, there must be a power behind it to enforce its decrees. And that is coercion.

I cannot conceive how English politicians, with the traditions of order that prevail in this country, should lend themselves, as some do, to apologise for and to defend Irish outrages and Irish lawlessness. Is the cause a good one? The right to live in another man's house without paying for the use of it is hardly a right for which one would think Englishmen should care to make themselves martyrs, and if the teaching of the Irish agitators is to prevail it will apply to a good deal more besides the land. No contract will be possible, no debt will be secure, credit will disappear, and where credit disappears capital is apt to follow. I repeat, then, the first duty of the State, in the interests of the Irish themselves, is to steadily enforce the law, while not refusing to amend it if reasonable cause can be shown. In the next place, I think the policy ought to be persevered in of helping tenants to buy their farms. Every freeholder so created is an enemy to further agitation, and that is why the Land Purchase Act, just passed, has been so bitterly opposed, though it only professed to do on a much more modest scale what Mr. Gladstone himself proposed to do on a gigantic scale in his Bill of 1886. Lastly, much as I dislike State interference and State assistance where they can be dispensed with, the case of Ireland is so exceptional that I should not grudge help to Irish industries where it could be given at no excessive cost. There are many ways in which that may be done without violating any economical law; and depend upon it, an Irishman who has work enough to do, and good pay for doing it, will not trouble his head much about Emmett, and Tone, and Fitzgerald, and the glorious memories of '98. But for the

land question, the question of nationality would never have been serious. Settle the one, and you take the sting out of the other.

I have troubled you too long. My excuse must be that I have only obeyed your wish, and that no question equalling in magnitude this question of union or disunion has been raised in our time. I will not affirm that a wrong decision will land us in a civil war, but I do say that it will place us in a position from which we shall be singularly skilful, or singularly fortunate, if we extricate ourselves without bloodshed. The next few years must decide the question. The decision does not rest with any public man, or with any Government. It rests with us ; it rests with you ; it rests with every one who has a voice or a vote. And where such issues are concerned it is not enough to be calmly neutral or carelessly friendly. In the face of public danger—and such danger is before us—action, energetic action, is a duty ; indifference and apathy are crimes.

LXXIII

*TECHNICAL EDUCATION—COMPETITIVE
EXAMINATIONS*

PRESTON : JANUARY 31, 1889

I RECEIVED your invitation to come here and to attend this meeting with very mixed feelings. On the one hand, I could not but feel it an honour and a pleasure to take part in a useful work of this kind, especially in a town with which I have so many connections, both personal and hereditary. On the other hand, I could not but feel that if what you want is a lecture on technical instruction, which will tell you anything new and valuable, you have come to the wrong man. First, because if novelty on such a subject is not absolutely impossible, it is possible only to those who have more practical knowledge than I can claim ; and next, because discussion is useless and unmeaning where there is no difference, where there is nothing to contend for on the one hand, and nothing to oppose on the other. Now, in this matter of technical instruction we are all on one side. Some of us expect much from it, and some of us little. Some have faith in theory, and some in rule of thumb. That is a difference of view which we find everywhere, but in the main we are agreed. The most eager educationists would not tell you that school teaching can supersede the actual practical training of the workshop, the farm, or the office. The most obstinate sceptic would scarcely argue that a lad is the worse for knowing something more of the general principles on which he is working than he can learn in the ordinary routine of his business.

I speak cautiously, because every good cause is liable to be injured by exaggeration, and that is peculiarly true in such matters as these. I have listened to speeches and read addresses which seem to imply a belief that a ploughman would draw a straighter furrow if he knew the geology of the soil on which he was working, and that a loom would be more carefully tended if the factory hand attending it were well up in the natural history of the cotton plant. Now, if we want to be believed we must keep to what is probable, and, speaking as an outsider in this matter, I should say that the strongest argument, to my mind, in favour of technical training is this, that every nation which is our rival in productive arts has gone in for it zealously. I can understand a soldier of the old school seeing no good in breech-loaders and magazine rifles and all the new arms of precision, but I can scarcely imagine that any one would deny the necessity of introducing those weapons when he knew that every army with which his own could be brought into collision was adopting them. It is an old story that we are competing with all the world, that the competition is likely to be more severe than ever, that in many cases it is fed and stimulated by English capital, and that we shall probably be harder put to it than we have ever been yet to hold our own. The Americans would have been far more dangerous rivals than they are if they had not—in the spirit, let us hope, of pure generosity—handicapped themselves by a protectionist system which has gone far to neutralise their many advantages. That system will not last for ever, and when it ceases we shall have even more trouble with them than we have now.

You may ask, What is the particular deficiency in our training which needs to be supplied? Well, I suspect that we do not always realise the change which has come over business in these later days. Men require to be more specially trained to it. They require, for dealings abroad, more knowledge of foreign languages than is usually got in the course of an English education. They require also more knowledge of the

demands of foreign countries, and more readiness to adapt themselves to the supply of those demands. It is said—I speak only at second hand of such matters, but our Consuls frequently repeat it—that we lose a great deal of business which we might keep or acquire by either not knowing or not caring what it is exactly that the foreign customer asks for ; that we do not like to be put out of our way, or disturbed in our accustomed routine, and that we are apt to supply rather what we think our customers ought to want than what they really do want. If that be so, it is exactly the sort of prejudice that a more extended and more thorough commercial education would remove. I believe that what I am saying is tolerably familiar to those who have been led by their business or their tastes to look into this subject. At any rate, the English public have felt the difficulty of the situation ; they have felt that they cannot afford to throw away a chance, and, however much may still remain to be done, I doubt if there is any country where the provision for technical instruction has been more rapidly increased during the last few years than in England. Teaching of the kind is not open to any of the objections which are frequently brought against our ordinary school system. If I rightly understand what it means, and in what it consists, it does not admit of cramming, that much abused practice to which so many reasonable and so many unreasonable objections have been taken. It does not involve the constant appeal to memory, and nothing but memory, which is the weak point of our literary schooling. You teach lads in these schools to do something, and to understand what they are doing. Now, I think it is a rule without exception, that whereas facts, or figures, or names, or definitions which are merely swallowed down, and which require no action beyond that of learning or remembering them, get speedily forgotten, what you learn to do is a possession retained for life. The books read at school leave a very dim impression after twenty or thirty years ; but nobody who has learnt to ride, to row, to swim, to skate, to play cricket, or to speak a foreign language ever entirely forgets his skill. It may get

rusty from disuse, but he soon regains it if wanted, and I suppose it is the same with drawing, with music, and with all other work in which the hand has a share as well as the head. And I think, further, that it is the general experience that whereas learning, where the memory alone comes into play, is to most people tedious, unless the subject be one of exceptional interest, learning to do something, no matter what, where a certain degree of skill and practice are necessary, is to most people agreeable rather than otherwise. Early lessons in drawing, I know, are often remembered with pleasure ; so is the learning to speak and write a new language ; but nobody, as far as I know, has connected pleasing associations with the memory of the Latin grammar.

Now, I do not know whether I shall be diverging too widely from the immediate subject before me if I make a few remarks on one closely connected with it, which of late has attracted a good deal of attention. You cannot have teaching of any kind without examinations in some form, and a storm of controversy has lately raged, perhaps is still raging, round the question whether or not examinations have been a success. That is a question of large public interest ; for if we were to condemn them as a system the relations of the school to the State would be profoundly altered ; and as regards public patronage, we should lose what is at any rate an effective check upon jobbery and a security against absolute stupidity in those who succeed. I believe that checks upon public patronage were never likely to be more wanted than now. The danger is not the same as it was forty years ago. It comes from a different quarter. When we first heard of appointments to be made by competition, what reformers were afraid of was the undue influence of peers and rich men and Members of Parliament. That is a very shadowy danger now; but things will not be better if for their influence be substituted that of election agents and wire-pullers. The fatal phrase of the American President Jackson, some sixty years ago, that ‘to the victor belongs the spoils,’

has, by the common consent of all intelligent Americans, done more harm to their administrative system than any other event in their history, because it means that the efficiency of the Civil Service is to be subordinated to the interests of party politics. That is a risk which we must avoid at all hazards. We have probably now the best and purest Civil Service that exists in the world, and we have got to keep it so. I believe that our present arrangements do effectually check jobbery, and that is a merit which makes up for many defects.

Some of the faults which may be found in the competitive system I have no hesitation in declaring to be imaginary. You see frightful pictures drawn of the health of young men destroyed by excessive competition and overwork. I will venture to assert that for one young man whose health has suffered from those causes, you will find half a dozen who have suffered from idleness, and from the habits of life which idleness in young men is always sure to produce. There is no better security for steadiness of conduct in a young man than regular work for a definite object. He cannot afford to play tricks with himself, or do anything which may unfit him physically or mentally for the time of trial. I do not tell you that there are no instances in which mischief has been done by over-study, but I think it will almost always be found, where that has happened, that it is due to one of two causes : either the youth is too weak physically to bear any strain — and in that case failure at an examination is only a fair warning of the more serious failure to which he would be liable in active life—or, which I suspect is the more common cause, he has been badly prepared or disinclined to work, or has been brought prematurely into the field, and then has tried to make up in a few months the ground which ought to have been covered by the work of years. Given a sound mind and body to begin with, and the exercise of ordinary care and prudence, I do not believe that there is anything unwholesome in competitive examination, and the best proof of it is that most of our successful lawyers and professional men have

gone through that ordeal, and that most of those who have taken the highest University degrees have been distinguished in later life, except when, as often happens, they were content with some quiet and useful employment, not caring to try for the big prizes.

But it cannot, I think, be denied that in these sweeping denunciations which we have heard of the competitive system as now administered, there is a certain admixture of truth. Two evils it undoubtedly has—one, I am afraid, not capable of amendment, but inherent in the very nature of things ; the other remediable, if not wholly, yet to a great extent. What is incurable is this, that where a very large number of candidates have to be examined at the same time, the process is necessarily a rough and ready one, leaving a good deal to chance ; because the full extent of a man's or even of a boy's knowledge cannot be really tested by half a dozen examination papers, and the time necessary for a complete and therefore absolutely fair comparison cannot be given. That is a weak point in the system, and, as far as I can see, it must remain so—at least, no remedy occurs to me. The other fault which I find is that, under examination tests as now applied, memory is apt to be too exclusively relied upon, that the question is not so much what the student understands as what he can recollect ; and then come in all the dodges of cramming and all the attendant abuses of which we hear so much, and which I think really are abuses, though they may be exaggerated in popular report. These are days in which we hold commissions of inquiry upon everything. As a rule not much comes of them except the multiplication of Blue Books. But that makes no difference ; there are always people ready to serve on them ; and though I rather shrink from suggesting an addition to the number, yet possibly a thorough overhauling of our examination system might serve the double purpose of silencing wild and fantastic objections and bringing to light incidental errors.

I am afraid this is rather a digression from our proper subject, but I trust to your kindness to excuse it, the more

so because in this institution, as everywhere else, you have examinations, and, in fact, to carry on any plan of teaching without them, whatever the subject-matter may be, would be like carrying on a business without keeping accounts. You must have some means of testing the work which you are doing, and no other or better has yet been devised.

LXXIV

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

LONDON: APRIL 12, 1889

I RISE to return thanks for that branch of the Legislature with which accident and the British Constitution have caused me to be connected. There are others who but for Parliamentary etiquette would be more entitled to reply to this toast. They sit by a prouder title than I can boast, for they sit in virtue of their own personal achievements, whereas I can only claim to sit by an inherited title. Whatever else may be noticeable about the House of Lords,¹ one thing is certain: we are the best-abused legislative body in Europe. Ever since I can remember anything connected with politics, I have heard it said sometimes that the House of Lords did nothing, and sometimes that it did mischief, and our early extinction has been prophesied on the rather incompatible grounds occasionally that we were useless, and occasionally that we were dangerous; but, somehow or other, we have continued to exist, and not only to exist, but to flourish. I sometimes think that we are like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which looks to anybody who sees it for the first time as if it were going to tumble down at once, but which has, nevertheless, contrived to hold its own for generations.

I fancy that most persons who have studied the subject will agree with me that there are many reforms in the constitution of the House of Lords which might be usefully adopted, but it is only justice to ourselves to say that the great difficulty in the way of adopting those useful and

¹ See vol. i. pp. 46, 101, for other speeches on the subject.

necessary reforms has not lain in any opposition within our own body, but rather in the jealousy of those outside, who do not desire to see any changes made which would create a stronger Second Chamber than now exists. I am not going into that question, and for my own part I am not very deeply concerned as to the particular manner in which a Second Chamber is constituted. It seems to be a difficult thing to do, for modern attempts to do it have for the most part failed; but the great thing is that you should have something in the nature of a Second Chamber—that I do believe in. No man, and no set of men, are good enough to be entrusted with an absolute and despotic authority; and it is a despotism in another form if a majority of one legislative body can at a moment's notice do anything affecting public or private interests without the opportunity of an appeal to the public. You want the possibility of such an appeal, and a Second Chamber gives you that, however it may be constituted.¹ As to the social value of peerages, I do not know that I am a good judge; but, notwithstanding the great multiplication of them in recent years, a multiplication which, however, has not done more than keep pace with the increase of population in the British Islands, I do not see that the social value of a peerage has diminished. I am sure there are quite as many people as ever there were who have got their own consent to be made peers—and a good many of them get what they want. There is only one other reflection suggested to me by this toast, and that is rather a melancholy one. All our political

¹ In a speech on April 2, 1881, upon this same subject, Lord Derby made the following noticeable remarks :

'It is sometimes said that in the course of events, and as time goes on, the House of Lords and the House of Commons are likely to go wider and wider apart. Well, I do not think that, for this reason. If we were to regard them both as absolutely and purely independent bodies, I admit that might be the natural tendency, but the fact is we have a superior whom we both recognise. That superior is public opinion—public opinion created not inside, but outside of our Legislature; public opinion which we are bound, if we can, to interpret wisely, whose manifestations it is always our duty to regulate, and sometimes, by timely criticism and by reasonable discussion, to correct, but which neither the House of Lords nor the House of Commons can oppose or defy.'

institutions are no doubt very glorious while they last, but for the most part they are very short-lived. All our administrative arrangements—I do not speak of the British Constitution, because there is a good deal of truth in the saying of a foreigner that the great merit of the British Constitution was that it did not exist—meaning of course that it did not exist in any written and definite form—all our constitutional system and all our administrative arrangements are very important while they last, but they do not last long. Those who have tunnelled the Alps, those who have bridged the Atlantic, those who have pierced isthmuses, those who have encircled the whole globe with a system of telegraphic communication, may boast that they have done work which will last for all time. We politicians cannot; we are very lucky if we accomplish anything which lasts our own time. But a man must work in his vocation. Those who cannot do work for the future must work for the present; those who cannot do great things must be content to do small things; and if they do them to the best of their power, that is all that anybody has a right to ask.

LXXV

*HOME RULE—THE LIBERAL UNIONIST PARTY—
IRISH GRIEVANCES—THE PROBABLE RESULTS
OF AN IRISH PARLIAMENT—A PAPER UNION—
ULSTER—A LONG STRUGGLE*

BIRMINGHAM : APRIL 24, 1889

It is under some difficulty that I rise to address you here, for I come as a stranger. I have no personal claim on your goodwill, but I come relying on the fact that we are united by common sympathies, that we are engaged in a common cause, and that we all alike recognise the gravity of the issue which is to be tried. It is no ordinary trial of strength between political parties that brings us together. It was no light matter three years ago for men who in principle are Liberals, or even Radicals, to consent to the possible postponement of many measures on which they had set their hearts. Nor was it, I suppose, easy for Conservatives to waive at once all feelings of distrust in regard to politicians whom they had been accustomed to look upon as opponents, and to join cordially with them in a new alliance. Yet that alliance has been made ; it exists, and it grows stronger, and not weaker, every day. You in this town have given signal proof of your determination, and I believe you would be ready to give it again if necessary, that no accidental misunderstanding shall destroy or impair the union of the Unionists. Now, the very fact that things are so is proof of the energy and intensity of our convictions. There are those, I know, who say that Ireland was only the occasion of a split in the Liberal party that must have come sooner or later, and that if the Irish difficulty had

never arisen some other excuse would have been found. Do you believe that? I do not. I have known something of party politics during the last thirty years, and I tell you a wilder fiction was never devised. The Liberal party was never divided until after the election of 1885. At that election, as we know, it voted solid. No doubt it had what it always has had, a right and left wing, and between those two sections absolute and entire agreement on all questions was not to be expected. But there was no substantial difference, no difference that could have interfered with common action; and when Mr. Gladstone's ill-omened declaration in favour of Home Rule was announced, the separation that ensued did not follow the lines of any earlier difference. We have among the Unionists many of the stoutest and staunchest of Radicals. It is enough to mention the honoured name of Mr. Bright, who has passed away lamented by the whole nation, and of our distinguished President, who still is and who, we hope, will long remain with us. On the other hand, Mr. Gladstone has carried away with him not a few of those politicians who were hitherto regarded as belonging to the moderate section—men like Lord Granville, Lord Spencer, and others whom I might name as belonging to the old Whig connection.

The fact is that a wholly new policy has been started upon us—one which has nothing to do with the old constitutional disputes of Radicals and Conservatives. Conservatives no doubt oppose Home Rule for Ireland as an innovation of the most gigantic and, as they and we both consider, of the most unnecessary kind. Liberals oppose it because in their belief it is incompatible with the political ideas which they value most—incompatible with equitable administration, with equal treatment for all religions, and with the maintenance and spread of free trade. If it is any glory or any gratification to Home Rulers that they have united formerly hostile parties in opposition to their proposals, that is a result which they may fairly boast of. As Liberal Unionists it is enough to say that we stand on our old ground; that we have not lowered our flag; that we have not deserted our leaders; that we fought

by their side the battle against Parnellism and disunion as long as they chose to fight it, and that we owe them no apology for now declining to reverse our action and to follow them into the enemy's camp. Something, no doubt, will have been lost to the Liberal cause by this separation. That we do not deny; we only affirm that it is no fault of ours, and I think we may fairly add, as indeed our Chairman has just now hinted, that there is abundance of useful legislative work that must be done, or at least that ought to be done, at some time, which cannot be undertaken when a great party struggle is going on, and which an Administration, supported as the present is and influenced as the present is by a Liberal alliance, may fairly take in hand. The Local Government Act of last year is a fair instance of the kind of legislation I mean. Nobody will deny that that Act is based on Liberal principles and is a development of Liberal policy. Yet it was accepted by the bulk of the Conservative party because, whether all of them personally liked it or not, they saw that it was required by the circumstances of the time.

There is plenty more work of the same kind to be done, and I do not see, and I do not believe, that there is any reluctance to do it. The Budget of this year is not a reactionary Budget; it is one frankly, though moderately, Liberal. The new plan of Scotch administration is not, I believe, taken as a whole, disliked by Scotch Liberals, and if anybody complains of the absence of striking and sensational legislation, let him remember how vast and how rapid has been the progress already and lately made. I doubt whether any country, not in a state of actual revolution, has worked out changes in its Constitution so extensive as we have done in the last five-and-twenty years. There is scarcely an institution, scarcely a law, which has not been largely modified within that time, and considering what our present franchise is, considering the fact that political power is now almost wholly in the hands of the poorer classes if they choose to use it, and, on the other hand, that most other things that men value are in the hands of the richer classes, I think that whatever any of us

may foresee, or whatever any of us may fear, we need not be afraid of reactionary legislation, or even of any undue inclination to rest and be thankful. As to the severance of personal ties among politicians, that is a disagreeable and even a painful thing for those whom it concerns. But, after all, it concerns only a limited number of persons. Few men are important ; no man is necessary. England will find servants enough when she wants them, even although every name now known in politics were to disappear to-morrow.

So much for the party aspect of the question, which, indeed, is a small part of the whole. It is tedious, it is wearisome to travel again and again over familiar ground, and yet, when we are met to confirm one another's faith in the principles which we hold, we are bound to satisfy ourselves, and to satisfy the friends to whom we speak, that these principles have not been taken up lightly or without sufficient cause. What is it that we object to when we declare our opposition to Home Rule ? In the first place we deny the fundamental principles on which the demand for Home Rule rests. We do not deny that Ireland may have grievances, but we deny that Ireland has any grievances due to or connected with the Union. We say that Ireland enjoys every right, every privilege, that belongs to any other part of the British Islands. Is she under-represented ? On the contrary, as we all know, a rearrangement of seats on the basis of population would give Ireland at least ten or twelve fewer seats than she has at present. Are Irish affairs neglected ? Why, one of the most practical arguments that is used in favour of Home Rule is that Irish affairs occupy the time of Parliament so exclusively that England and Scotland cannot get their business attended to. Are Irish Members, when they will condescend to observe the ordinary decencies of debate, refused a hearing or listened to with impatience ? Why, it is notorious that, being scarcely more than one-seventh of the House of Commons, they claim a share of time and attention entirely disproportionate to their numbers, and which would not be granted to Englishmen or Scotchmen similarly situated. Have their grievances in the

recent past been ignored, or has redress been refused ? Take the two which always figured most prominently in their speeches—the question of the Church and the question of the land. To satisfy them, and as an act of justice, the Protestant Church was disestablished and disendowed ; and they enjoyed what, at any rate, most Liberal politicians think a most desirable state of things, and which England, Scotland, and Wales have not—entire mutual independence of Church and State. Take the land. There, again, Parliament has gone out of its way, and, I may say, has put a strain upon its own convictions, in order to give the Irish the benefit of a land system which, whether in itself desirable or not, is at any rate that which they never ceased to cry out over. And when that, too, failed to satisfy the parties for whose benefit it was intended, we are even, indeed, lending English capital and largely employing English credit to make the Irish peasant the owner of his own farm, a thing which we have not done and are not doing for any other part of the United Kingdom.

Now, I ask, are these proofs of indifference to Irish complaints ? Then, as to local government, it is perfectly true that local institutions of Ireland, as they now exist, give far more power to the Executive and less to elected authorities than was the case here even before the Act of last year. But how has that state of things come about ? Why, notoriously the reason of it is not the desire of the Lord Lieutenant or the Secretary or the Dublin officials to exercise those local functions ; but the strength and bitterness of local party feeling, and the fact that the Irish people are in two camps—neither party willing to trust the other. Nobody desires, in truth, to withhold from Irish counties or boroughs the control of strictly local affairs ; but we are bound in justice to see that whatever powers we give are not such as can be deliberately and systematically used, as in many cases, I believe, there is all the will to use them, for the ruin of an unpopular minority. That is the real difficulty. It is a difficulty for which we are not responsible ; it arises out of the very condition of Irish parties. I repeat this—that whatever may have been the case

would be to extend the powers of the new Irish Legislature, and every limitation of those powers, however it might have been stipulated beforehand, would be exclaimed against as an act of tyranny and oppression? Why, we should be told, and it would be quite true, ‘ You conceded our Parliament in deference to our claim of nationality ; do you imagine that the mere creation of a big Vestry to deal with parochial affairs is enough to satisfy a national sentiment such as ours ? ’ We all know what the answer must be. We feel that if we were ourselves Irish Nationalists we should not be content with so mere a shadow of power, and it is idle to expect anybody will be content. I do not go so far as some people who say there is absolutely no alternative between union and separation, but I do contend that, if we are not to maintain the existing Union, Ireland must not be a sham, but a real nationality. It must have its own army, its own navy, its own diplomacy, its own tariff, possibly its own favoured and dominant Church. Are we prepared to grant that or not? If we are, let us say so at once, and end a bitter and vexatious conflict ; but if we are not so prepared—and I believe very few people are—it is surely better to stand on the firm ground which we now occupy than to plunge into a system of concessions, one of which will inevitably involve another, and to be perpetually dragging on, saying at every new surrender, ‘ This must positively be the last.’ That is a policy to my mind without dignity, without grace, and without sense.

We are often taunted by our opponents with supporting what is called only a paper union, while they are for a union of hearts. The paper union is, at least, a substantial fact, and the union of hearts is, at least, problematical. How long would gratitude for the gift of Home Rule last? The gratitude for such concessions is not, I am afraid, in politics, an appreciable force. The whole history of nations is a record of wars against recent allies, and alliances with recent enemies, and in the course of international life it must be so. What would the Irish have to be grateful for if Home Rule came? Would it come as the free gift of English generosity? No, it would

have been notoriously extorted by the exigencies of English party politics, from the annoyance to England of eighty Members of Parliament to vote equally against every Government, and by the supposed danger to ourselves of a discontented Ireland. Depend upon it Irish statesmen would never yield to us a single point of advantage in the future in return for what we had done in the past. It would not be reasonable to expect it, and I do not know if it would be even just to ask it. Remember, too, something else—that there are in Ireland hearts to be lost as well as hearts to be won. There is no bitterness like that of an alienated friend—alienated because he thinks he has been betrayed, and, apart from all questions of honour, you would make a bad bargain if you purchased the temporary thanks of Munster and Connaught at the cost of the permanent resentment of Ulster.

That leads me to the only further remark which I shall make on the constitutional part of the question. The strongest practical argument for Home Rule is the embarrassment caused by Irish hostility in the working of the Parliamentary machine. We are often told, 'You cannot carry on affairs with one-seventh of the House of Commons irreconcilable.' It is an odd thing for Home Rulers to put forward ; they want to set up a Parliament in which it is as certain as anything can be that the irreconcilables, the men of the north of Ireland, will be at least one-fourth, and more probably one-third. Do they expect that Parliament to work or not ? If it will not, they had better not talk about the impossibility of carrying on Parliamentary business here under conditions infinitely less unfavourable than those under which they wish to place it there.

You may, I am afraid, think that I have dwelt too long on the constitutional argument ; but, after all, that is the really important part of the case. What I may have said, and how B has contradicted himself, and how D has blundered, all these little personal incidents that turn up in the course of a controversy like this, are amusing and exciting enough for the moment ; but after a few weeks, if not after a few days, they

blow over—they are done with and forgotten. What is permanent, what is essential, is the relation which England and Ireland are to hold to one another, and we must not allow that question to be obscured or pushed out of sight by any petty and personal details. As to this coercion claptrap, I would deal with it if I could see anything in it to answer. It will be time enough to deal with it seriously when our opponents can show that any one has been punished except for obstructing or attempting to obstruct the authorities in the execution of the law, and when they can point to any country throughout the civilised world in which such obstruction is not a punishable offence. We scarcely realise on this side the water either the monstrous distortions of fact that occur when eviction scenes are sensationaly described, or the care and theatrical skill with which those scenes are got up by the local agitators to make a figure in the English press.

I conclude with only one remark. Do not expect, do not hope, that this controversy can be quickly brought to an end. I wish with all my heart that it could be so, but I do not see how it can. If we win at the next election, which I suppose we shall, we cannot expect that a powerful Parliamentary minority will at once abandon a cause to which they are deeply pledged. If by any mischance we were to lose, if a majority of electors declared in favour of Home Rule in some form, even then the fight would only have begun, for it is one thing to accept Home Rule as an abstract principle, and quite another thing to work it out in detail. Therefore, in any case we must keep together, prepared if need be for a long struggle, minimising such differences as may exist among ourselves, not making too much of small victories, and not disheartened by small defeats, but trusting in the good sense of the English people, and secure at least of two things—the depth and sincerity of our convictions and the impartial verdict of history.

LXXVI

HOME RULE—A FEDERAL UNION—INCREASED PROSPERITY OF IRELAND—THE LAND QUESTION—THE ALLIANCE OF THE UNIONISTS

LONDON : JUNE 27, 1889

We have, I may venture to say, blown the bill of 1886 out of the water. We have challenged its authors to produce a new one, and very wisely they have held their tongues. I will not assert that their guns have been silenced, but at least they have been drawn back. We hear much about coercion, something about sugar and free trade, and every casual word or incident that can be used to reflect discredit on the Government is made the most of. That is all according to the rules of the game ; but the one thing which Home Rulers will not argue about is Home Rule, and in their own interest they are quite right. One fact, however, has been cleared up by discussion. We were told at first that Ireland was to be treated in a purely exceptional manner ; the rest of the United Kingdom was not to be interfered with. We have pointed out again and again that that was impossible ; that with the Irish Union repealed, the Scotch, and even the Welsh Union, could not be permanently maintained. If I may judge by what I hear and read, it seems that on that point our assertion, disputed at first, is now generally admitted. It is seen at last that the question of Irish nationality involves that of federal union, not between two nationalities only, but between four. That is an important advance, because it gives us something like a principle to discuss.

Now, I say nothing against federal unions in general. They may create a firm and lasting bond. They have done so in the case of Switzerland on a small scale, and in the case of America on a great scale. I omit more recent instances because in such matters time is the only real test of success. But I lay down this rule with confidence—that no federal union can be stable or successful except where there is some at least approximate equality of importance and power between its various component States; or, at any rate, that no such union can exist where one State alone can outweigh all the rest put together. Now that would be the case with us. If England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland are to be treated as separate States, united for federal purposes, the effect of that will be that in all federal matters—in all matters, that is, concerning the whole—the three minor States, supposing them agreed among themselves, may at any moment be overruled by the single voice of England. You cannot prevent that if representative power is to be equally apportioned according to population. And if wealth is to have anything to do with the proportion of representation, the superiority of England will be even more marked. Now, what would follow from that state of things? Why, that your ingenious plan for emancipating the so-called nationalities only ends in placing them in a position of more entire, more marked, and more unmistakable dependence. They are no longer one with England, incorporated with us; but they must do in all matters of Imperial concern whatever England pleases. They are half separated only in order that they may be made to feel more thoroughly their position of subordination. That is not, I think, a gift of freedom for which they are likely to feel very thankful. I know what will sometimes be answered, that Home Rule for Ireland is only the first step in a general federation of the Empire, which is to include Canada, Australia, and South Africa, as well as the British Islands. Mr. Parnell, I remember, once took that line in a speech which he made, and, as addressed to an English audience, it was a very ingenious suggestion. Well, Imperial federation is a grand

idea, and I am not surprised that it should have taken a strong hold of the imaginations even of thoughtful and sensible men. This is not the time or place to argue whether it is a practicable arrangement or not. All for which I now contend is that it does not exist even on paper, in the shape of a working scheme ; that the colonists, who are mainly concerned, have not shown the slightest desire to accept it ; and that till they do, it is premature to treat it as the basis of a new Constitution for Great Britain and Ireland. In fact, for my own part, I am willing to make a fair bargain with our Home Rule friends who are believers also in Imperial federation. Let them begin at the other end. Let them federate the Colonial Empire first ; and if they will agree to leave Irish Home Rule alone till they have done that, I will agree to accept Home Rule when they have done it. That is a fair offer, and for us, in my belief, it is a perfectly safe one to make. But, of course, when I speak of federation in this connection, I mean an organised system of federation resting on a definite agreement. I do not give the name of federation to the kind of loose alliance or protectorate which is virtually all that we have now.

I will not go over ground which has been thoroughly trodden by hundreds who have been before me, but at this point I would ask one plain question. Ireland is represented by Mr. Gladstone in his recent Cornish tour, and by many others, as having suffered grievously from the Union. Is it, or is it not, the fact that, in regard of material prosperity, in regard of the comfort and well-being of the people, Ireland has advanced more rapidly in the last fifty years than any other part of the British Islands ? I have no doubt myself of the answer to that query. Wages are higher, food is better, the single-room mud hovels of old days are being displaced by cottages of the English type, and nobody now sees the crowds of beggars which once hung about the towns and infested the high roads. But there is another way of looking at the matter. All Ireland is under the same law. Admitting, which I do, the relative poverty of the south and

west when measured by an English standard, how comes it that Ulster flourishes, as to everybody's knowledge it does? If political causes have operated elsewhere to keep Ireland poor, why not there also? If the Union has impoverished Cork and Galway, why has it not impoverished Belfast? Yet we know the contrary to be the case. That fact alone is, to my mind, conclusive as to the backwardness of Ireland in general not being due to the English connection. I do not say that English misgovernment in past times may not have had something to do with it; but it is rather late in the day to be called upon to apologise for religious disabilities which ceased two generations ago, for commercial restrictions which ceased ninety years ago, or for penal laws which have had no operative existence for considerably more than a century. And if any man says that Ireland is not now governed or legislated for with due reference to Irish ideas and feelings, my answer would be to point to such questions as those of the Church and the land. In regard to local government, we are prepared to make large concessions. All that we require is, in that and in other matters, to have some assurance that the ordinary laws of justice shall not be disregarded in the case of a locally unpopular minority, and that the Protestant ascendancy of old days shall not be replaced by a Catholic and Celtic ascendancy, which would be quite as one-sided in its dealings.

But look at the state of Ireland itself. I am not an optimist, especially where the Irish are concerned, but I do not see how any one can doubt, with the evidence which we have before us, that in regard to agrarian crime, and—what is nearly the same thing—in regard to agrarian agitation, there has been a marked falling off, that the Plan of Campaign is being discredited and recognised as a failure, and that some new dodge will have to be resorted to if the American dollars are to be raked in as they have been during the last few years. I will not trouble you with figures, but I believe it is not and cannot be disputed that, alike in regard of outrages, of persons boycotted, of evictions, and of rents unpaid, there

has been a decrease which is no exaggeration to call extraordinary. And that is not wonderful. Who can be surprised that an Irish peasant should refuse to pay his rent, when he is assured by the people whom he most confides in, his priest probably included, that he has only got to hold out and that his landlord will not dare to enforce the law? He has been continually told that till he has come to believe it. Experience is now undeceiving him; and as there is no country in the world where men are more ready than in Ireland to resist authority when they think it is feeble, so there is none where they are more ready to yield to it when they see it is strong.

Now, as to the future, I think it is generally felt that the creation of what I will not call a peasant proprietary, but a proprietary composed of those who were formerly tenants, gives the best security for peace, and that such a body can be created on a large scale only by using the credit of the State. No doubt there are objections—grave and reasonable objections—to that policy, and in a different state of things I should very likely have been one of the first to urge them; but in politics we have often only the choice between two evils or two dangers, and just now the one paramount necessity is to give a larger number of the Irish people a personal interest in keeping down agitation and maintaining order. I sometimes hear it said that, by helping the tenants to buy, especially the larger tenants, we are only creating a new landed proprietary, which will soon be as unpopular as the old. I disbelieve that for various reasons. In the first place, the buyer will be always a resident, and almost always an Irishman, so that it will be impossible to talk about Ireland being a foreigner's farm, or to get up a fresh agitation against Englishmen and absentees. In the next place, throughout the south and west of Ireland, which are, or were, the disturbed districts, he will be almost always a Catholic, and the local priests will have no professional interest in crying him down. And, lastly, the new owners will be small owners. They will not as a rule be under any temptation to sublet; and they will

not be exposed to the odium which, under a democratic system, falls on any class which is at once limited in numbers and reputed to be wealthy. No doubt there will be a heavy debt to pay off, and till it is paid a good deal of Ireland will be virtually owned in England; but that is an inevitable condition of any connection, whatever its form may be, between a rich country which is able to lend and a poor one which is compelled to borrow. No doubt, also, the State will find itself occasionally compelled to enforce its claims when the borrower is unable or unwilling to pay. But I do not see why it should be worse for the State to have to do that on its own account than to do it for the benefit of private creditors. And as to the expense, it is not necessary that the process of purchase should be undertaken on a great scale at once. It may be gradual, and spread over a long term of years. The very fact that a tenant is able to buy will prevent impatience. Possibly in many cases it may even operate to make him indifferent as to buying. People are always tolerant of a condition from which they know that they can escape whenever they please.

I do not contend that purchase will be everywhere an effective remedy. In some districts it will hardly be possible. You have many parts of the west where the population is too poor not merely to buy their holdings, but to live on them if they had nothing to pay. In such cases other measures must be tried. But the fact that your remedy will not be applicable in, say, one case out of ten, is surely no reason for not applying it in the other nine. I think I know what will be said of any such proposal. We shall be told: 'All this is very well. You may improve the material condition of Ireland; possibly you will: but do not imagine that you will thereby diminish the desire for a separate nationality.' Well, we will see about that. I dare say those who now call themselves Nationalists will not care to drop their name. I admit that in a certain class the feeling will remain, and that with certain individuals it may even be as strong as before; but that will not be so with the masses. You will have opened so wide a safety-valve when the tenants are contented, that the agitators will never

again be able to get up steam enough to produce an explosion. The National question has been always with us; but in our generation, at least until it was connected with the land agitation, it took no real hold on the people. Remember how utterly it collapsed after the famine, and the abortive attempts at insurrection in 1848. Why was that? Because in every part of the country there were vacant farms; and the scramble and struggle for the means of existence caused by over-population had ceased. My belief is, though I may be sanguine, that in a few months you will hear very little more of evictions on a large scale. Land-owners do not undertake them willingly. They are costly and troublesome. They have been a necessary result of and a reply to the adoption of the Plan of Campaign. When that plan is shown to have failed, refusals to pay rent will cease—as, in fact, they are ceasing now. In all probability, by the time the present Parliament comes to an end, the electors who will decide upon our fate in the future will have a very different Ireland to deal with from the Ireland of 1886, or even of 1889. What is more, our Home Rulers are becoming aware of that fact, and that is the reason why they have so suddenly discovered the iniquity of septennial Parliaments—a subject which, for practical purposes, I do not think we have heard of for a quarter of a century. It reminds me of the old story of a medical man called in with somewhat needless haste to attend to a trifling complaint. ‘Is it an urgent case?’ asks the doctor. ‘Yes,’ says the man who was sent for him; ‘if you don’t make haste the patient will have got well before you come.’ So it will be here. The case for Home Rule may not be a strong one now, but it is a good deal stronger than it will be three years hence.

The resolution which I am to move does not require many words in its support. The alliance between Liberals and Conservatives in defence of the Union was not the result of intrigue or of personal calculation. It was imposed upon both sections by the necessities of the situation. It will cease, no doubt, when the danger ceases which it was formed to

meet. It will continue, I venture to predict, while that danger continues. It serves at once to strengthen and to restrain the present Government. It enables them to resist the pressure of high Tory followers, and to carry such measures as the Local Government Act of last year and the Land Transfer Bill now before Parliament. It creates, or rather it recognises, a political state of things which cannot last for ever; but it meets the wants of the present time, and no political combination can do more.

LXXVII

*CONTINUATION SCHOOLS—EVENING OCCUPATIONS
FOR YOUNG PERSONS*

MANCHESTER: OCTOBER 9, 1889

I PRESUME that most of those to whom I am now speaking know something about the movement, if one is to use so pretentious a word, which it is the object of this meeting to promote. It has grown by a natural and simple process out of the system of universal and compulsory school teaching which we have established during the last twenty years. In 1870 the nation decided that, so far as was in the power of any public authority to prevent it, no child should grow up unable to read and write, or destitute of at least some elementary knowledge. That object has been in the main accomplished; but the very success which has been achieved so far leads to a further demand. It is felt and seen that of all the teaching which has cost so much trouble and money—certainly not less than seven millions yearly, and probably a good deal more—a large proportion, larger probably than most of us suspect, goes absolutely to waste. Just as in the richer classes, in the portion of society which is supposed to be educated, boys pass years of their lives chiefly in trying to pick up a little Greek and Latin, which nine-tenths of them never utilise and soon forget, so in the village school or Board school a great deal is learned which, from mere disuse, is absolutely lost in a very short time—that is, looking at the matter from a purely intellectual or educational point of view. Looked at from the point of view of morals and discipline the result is nearly the same. A lad is turned out of his school, and started to make

his own way in life at the age of twelve or thirteen. It is quite right that he should begin at that age to contribute towards his own support. It is not only right, but in a society organised like ours it is even a necessity. But work does not take up all his time. The evenings remain to be disposed of, and what is a lad to do? where is he to go? He is not always welcome at home, especially if the house is small and the family large. Even if he is welcome he does not always care to stay there, and parental control is feeble in the classes that maintain themselves. There is no place for him to resort to except such as are not of a very desirable character, and the streets of Manchester on a winter evening are not very attractive or exactly the sort of playground you would wish to see selected. Therefore, on various grounds we think we are justified in asking for help to enable those boys who really take an interest in learning to carry their school education a little further. There are three separate but not unconnected objects which the promoters of these classes have in view. They want to help in the extension of that technical instruction for which everybody is now calling, and which is so useful, perhaps so necessary, for material success in life. They want to help young men who have a turn for culture, whether scientific, literary, or artistic, to develop their faculties, for the sake of the increased enjoyment, the deepened interest in life which all increase of intellectual power tends to give; and, lastly, they want to help boys of the ordinary sort—not exceptionally bright or exceptionally studious, but boys with a good deal of human nature in them—to find some decent, harmless, and pleasant occupation for the hours which are not taken up by work, and which in the absence of such occupation will almost certainly be wasted in idleness, and very probably wasted in mischief. That is our justification for wanting to set up evening classes.

But why are they called *recreational*? That is a question very likely to be asked—a question which I asked when the subject was new to me. If merely to promote amusement, even harmless amusement, had been the object of this move-

ment, I should no doubt have wished it well, but I think you would not have seen me on this platform. We have rather too much talk about amusement in these days. It seems to be thought that nobody can possibly be expected to do what is wearisome, and that to be entertained is one of the first necessities of life. Personally, I do not see things quite in that way ; but we have a justification for putting prominently forward the idea of recreation in this case. We cannot, and we would not if we could, make attendance at our classes compulsory. We do not quarrel with the principle of compulsion, but we see that in things of the mind it is not very effective. You may bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. You may force a boy to go to school, but you cannot easily force him to learn, and certainly you cannot force him to remember what he has learnt. We can only teach those who are willing to come to be taught, and that being so, to make our teaching attractive is not merely desirable, it is indispensable. The hook must be baited if we are to catch fish. We must not conceal from ourselves some disadvantages under which we suffer. In the poorest classes, perhaps in the artisan class also, there are many persons who do not care for or value instruction for their children. That is not so, I believe, in Scotland, nor in America, but I am afraid it is so in England, and when that is the case you can hardly expect the children themselves to be wiser. Again, compulsion in educational matters, as in most others, has certain inherent drawbacks. Boys who go to school only because the law compels them are naturally inclined to think the whole thing a nuisance, and to get away for ever as soon as they can. One must not blame them for that. I do not know that many of us were much disposed to appreciate learning for its own sake at the age of eleven or twelve, and I am not sure that those who are so prematurely wise are always the most successful later on. At any rate, the fact is, as I learn from those who have carefully studied the subject, that the attendance at night schools is under one per cent. of those who leave the day schools, and for the enormous mass all the

education they ever get—except what I do not undervalue, but what we are not speaking of now, the education of practical work—ends at twelve years old. In London alone it is calculated that 80,000 children leave the elementary schools every year at the average age of twelve and a half; so that you have 200,000 at least between twelve and fifteen, and nearly 400,000 between twelve and seventeen. In most towns, I believe, the age of leaving school is rather below that of London. So that it is not too much to say that, as regards the mass of the English people, their education, apart from the trade which they learn, ends in their thirteenth year. Now, the objections to that state of things are obvious. It puts us at a disadvantage in competing with better trained countries, and it does, I believe, more than anything else to keep in existence a class of which England has more than any country I know—the rough half-taught lad, who is as often as not in mischief from sheer want of any better way of passing his time. We all know how in the upper and middle classes the years between twelve and eighteen are precisely those which parents and teachers look to as the most critical, the most dangerous—often the most decisive as to the future. It is in those years that the innocence and irresponsibility of childhood ceases. It is in those years that the most powerful and universal of human instincts is first awakened. It is in those years that habits and tendencies are most certainly formed and most permanently fixed. We should think it little better than murder to let a boy in the richer classes run wild during that period of life, and if he went utterly to the bad afterwards we should say, ‘Of course, what else could be expected?’

Well, I do not see why what is a social necessity for us should not be at least as desirable for our poorer neighbours. I need not tell you what a lad of fifteen or sixteen, with strong animal passions and imperfect training, is likely to be doing if he is not looked after. The best that can happen, and bad is the best, is one of those boy and girl marriages which are so common in the poorer classes, which hamper the men who contract them for life, and which throw on our streets such

multitudes of weakly under-sized children. The worst that can happen, the more undesirable alternative, you know without my telling you. I think I have sufficiently explained what we mean and what we want, and I would sum it up in one sentence: Look after the lads, and you may trust the men to look after themselves. And recollect what these lads are. They may not know much; many of them may not be particularly wise; but when they reach the age of twenty-one they form part of the now ruling class of England. The working class, as we all know, outnumbers not only every other, but all others put together. No policy can be successful, no policy can have so much as a trial, which does not commend itself to the opinions and the feeling of the artisans and the labourers of England. They in the last resort must determine what our relations with foreign States are to be, how we are to manage India, what we are to do with our Colonies, whether we shall stick to competition, or try to protect native industry again. It is a new experiment in the world's history that we are trying. The United States have many constitutional checks; the Republics of antiquity were slave-holding communities, and, in fact, in the view of the present day would be looked upon as only aristocracies with a large number of members. We in England have given all power practically to the House of Commons; and we have given all power over the House of Commons to those who work with their hands. Lord Sherbrooke said long ago when the franchise was more restricted, 'Let us at least teach our masters to read and write;' and we say, Let us endeavour to bring about a state of things in which every English elector shall have at least as much knowledge as is possessed by the average American citizen. That may not be a very lofty ideal to reach, but I suspect it is a good deal above our ordinary English level.

LXXVIII

*SECONDARY EDUCATION—THE BOY AND THE
MAN—READING*

ORMSKIRK : OCTOBER 28, 1889

It is not easy to say anything on the subject of popular education which shall contain any novelty or interest, not because the importance of the subject is not felt, for we all admit that, but because the truths which were useful and in place when uttered to the last generation are now commonplaces, because on the leading questions connected with popular schools we are either all agreed or know perfectly well what are the facts on which we disagree, and they are for the most part of such a nature that argument is more likely to confirm differences than to do away with them. Details may reasonably be left to experts. As to principles, we have most of us formed an opinion, and are not likely to change it. The Act of 1870 has done an important and useful work. We may say with truth that the number of untaught children is now inappreciably small, and though undoubtedly it is the fact that of what has been learnt at school an enormous proportion is forgotten afterwards, yet that is common to all classes. It is only what must be expected when we are dealing with lads who have lives of hard work before them, and to a considerable extent the want may be supplied by that secondary teaching of which we all in these days hear and talk so much. We cannot expect in twenty years to make good the deficiencies of many bygone generations, but we have done as much as any one can reasonably expect; and whereas formerly the school arrangements of foreign countries were

constantly held up to us as an example to follow, we stand now, I take it, quite as high as most of them with regard to these matters. On the whole, without for a moment contending that our existing machinery is perfect, I see no reason for disappointment or impatience ; and as the wise policy of the Legislature has left a large discretion in the hands of local authorities, we may fairly assume that progress in the future will be as rapid as the general public opinion of the time and place desires that it should be. Further than that you cannot go, and if you try it, sudden spurts of energy will be followed by long periods of inaction, and more will be lost than gained.

I am not going now to discuss any general questions connected with popular education, such as free schools, School Boards, or the like. There are plenty of opportunities for such controversies, and what we are dealing with here is something different. But this Grammar School will be popular in the best sense of the word. We all hope and believe and intend that it should be. It is designed for a somewhat higher class of teaching than that of the ordinary village school. I suppose it is admitted on all hands that our weak point in educational matters is still (though less than formerly) the want of good secondary or middle-class teaching. The upper classes have got a system, not perhaps in itself very admirable, certainly not as good as they are apt to think it, but a system which they like, which suits them, and which they are not disposed nor likely to alter. The children of the poor are, at any rate, better provided for than they ever were before. For the middle class a great deal has been done, but a great deal still remains to do. We cannot at a few years' notice supply every town with a grammar school such as we should like to see ; but here in Ormskirk we have an ancient foundation to build upon, and though the endowments are not large, yet that is a circumstance which ought not to discourage us, but rather to incite us to make up by good organisation and successful working for the deficiency in

that respect. We have a new scheme for the management of this school—new within the last few years—a new master, and by all accounts one admirably fitted for this work, a new organisation, and we have, as we believe, a strong local feeling which is favourable to our institution. With these advantages we ought to prosper, and if we do not the fault will be our own. We all know that, whether we like it or not, whether or not we think it an ideal state of things—I am finding no fault with it for one—we live in a world which is one of keen and eager competition, a very good world for the industrious and the prudent, for the healthy bodies and active minds, a very bad one for those whom any cause, whether physical, mental, or moral, has disabled from holding their own in the struggle.

A great writer of this century has made the true, though unpleasant, remark that ‘from man to the meanest insect all are at strife,’ and certainly the industrial contests of peace, though more harmless, and we hope more beneficial, are not less strenuously carried on than those which involve the use of gunpowder. A lad well trained is not sure of success, but he has made a good beginning, and he starts with a character which is in his favour, with an intellect at least partially developed, and with habits of steady application which are more important in the long run than showy and brilliant talent. If I were to offer a word of advice to those who have gained prizes to-day, it would be to warn quite as much as to encourage them, to say that early successes count for nothing unless vigorously followed up, and to tell them what is everybody’s experience, that many of those who at school and college were pointed out as the coming men of their generation have dropped back quietly into obscurity, while others who were thought comparatively nothing of have pushed forward steadily and reached the front. I was talking only the other day to a middle-aged lawyer, well acquainted with the leaders of his profession, and we chanced to speak of one of the highest dignitaries of the law. ‘Oh,’ said my friend, ‘I remember him well at college, and I remember also

that there was another man of the same standing from whom much more was expected ; but that man, for some reason or another, never got any practice, and he is an obscure barrister still.' Well, there may have been some chance in that, but it was a type of what often happens. The race of professional life or business life is a very long one, and it is one in which endurance counts for more than speed. Too much work or too little work, carelessness in the management of bodily health, a discursive habit of mind, an eager pursuit of pleasure, an impatience of what is dull and tedious, a temperament too sanguine on the one hand, or too easily discouraged on the other, may all be fatal obstacles to what seemed a certain success. I do not know which would be the longer list of the two—a list of the brilliant young men who have broken down and dropped out of the running, or a list of the men who have got on and played their part well against the disheartening predictions of their early acquaintances.

There was a noted wit and man of talent who sat in the Irish Parliament of the last century together with young Arthur Wellesley, afterwards the great Duke of Wellington, and he had in later life the courage to admit that, looking at the great General of future days when a youth, he had both thought and said, 'Well, whoever gets on in life, that young man will not.' Take another instance from a different department of life. Some of you may have read the interesting autobiography left by Anthony Trollope, of whose ability and industry in later life there can be no doubt. In fact, his literary industry was exceptional and extraordinary. He tells with quite amusing frankness the story of how, in his early days, both as a boy and a clerk, he was credited with an absolute absence of both one quality and the other. Well, my moral is, let those who have carried off the prizes to-day remember that they have only taken the first step out of many, and that over-confidence or carelessness may ruin their prospects. Let those who have failed remember the same thing, and take their failure as a stimulus, not as a discouragement. Advice as to the conduct of life is seldom of much use,

especially from strangers. Perhaps advice in general, being always gratuitous, is for the most part worth what it costs ; but if a lad has any turn for reading—and I do not mean by that only reading of a severe and difficult kind, but reading which is good of its kind in any line—he has within him a source of pleasure, and pleasure of the sort which it is a pity and a shame not to utilise. Books ought not to be the whole of any man's life, and the taste for them is in great part a matter of personal temperament ; but I am sure that the man is happiest in whose life they fill an important place, both for what he gains and what he escapes. He gains by assimilating theories higher than he is probably capable of producing, and by the wider outlook over life which he commands. He escapes to a great extent the inevitable temptations of those whose leisure is mere idleness. He escapes what is scarcely less dangerous, the sense of weariness and vacancy when those temptations are resisted, but when there is nothing else to substitute for undesirable forms of pleasure. That is a fertile theme. I do not dwell upon it, but I do emphatically express dissent from that dictum of ancient wisdom which we must somehow or other have misconstrued, that increase of knowledge means increase of sorrow. I do not think it is so. Increased knowledge may shatter some illusions, and may show us that life is not so rose-coloured as we are apt to think it in youth ; but it brings ample compensation, and the proof is that no one who has it will ever wish to be without it. Increased care, increased anxiety it may bring ; but even so trouble is better than apathy, as waking is better than sleeping, and life better than death.

LXXIX

*FREE TRADE—PROTECTION IN THE UNITED STATES
AND IN THE COLONIES—PEASANT PROPRIETORS
—NATIONALISATION OF THE LAND—LEASEHOLD
ENFRANCHISEMENT—FOREIGN AND COLONIAL
TRADE—CAPITAL AND LABOUR*

ROCHDALE : NOVEMBER 12, 1889

IT is always a pleasure to me to stand before a Lancashire audience, and nowhere more than here, for Rochdale has a double claim to be remembered in the history not only of our county, but of our country. Your town is inseparably connected with the great orator and single-minded statesman whose residence during most of his life was among you ; and you may claim to have been the first to bring into practical existence that co-operative system which has already achieved so remarkable a success, and which in my judgment promises better than any other remedy yet suggested for the great and threatening evil which is upon us—the chronic war between capital and labour.

Of the actual state of the country, in an economic point of view, I do not care to speak, for I think we all understand it pretty well. There have been times within the last twenty years when optimistic illusions were natural, and when it was a good service done to the public to throw a little cold water upon them. There has been more recently a period of depression, in which the exaggerations to be guarded against were all in an opposite direction, and when it was opportune to ask people not to make quite sure that our national decadence had begun. We are not now, I think, under the influence of a strong bias either way. We see a revival of

industry, and we know of no reason why it should not continue. We do not shut our eyes against evidence of the formidable competition which we have to meet, but neither do we despair of meeting it successfully. The future depends on ourselves, on our continued powers of invention, on our undiminished spirit of enterprise, on industry unrelaxed, and, above all, on the absence of that suicidal hostility between employers and employed which may very easily make the rich poor, but which will never make the poor rich. It is not so difficult to kill an industry as many people seem to think, and once killed it is not quickly brought to life again.

There is another topic on which I will barely touch, though I do not avoid it from any fear of provoking opposition here. We have had many proofs that whatever the relative position of political parties may be, Parliament is not disposed to allow of any tampering with the sound principles of free trade. I know that there are people who believe a revival of protection in some form to be possible, and who think the example of the United States likely to be catching. I utterly disbelieve in any risk from that quarter, and I will tell you why. No one would be mad enough to tax imported food, and if that is not proposed what inducement have the various classes connected with land to add to the price of articles which they must buy, while there is to be no addition to the price of articles of which they are sellers? I do not think the Sugar Convention¹ was meant as a first step towards reviving protection as a system. It looks to me more like a concession, not too wisely made, to the importunity of supporters, and probably with a strong suspicion at least that nothing would come of it. I am not behind the scenes, and I do not care to be; but although most of us would be glad to get rid of the bounty system if it can be done by diplomatic means, I do not think that the House of Commons will agree, or even that it will be asked to agree, to a system of discriminating or diffe-

¹ A Convention signed in London, August 30, 1888, by the Plenipotentiaries of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, and Spain, 'to insure by reciprocal engagements the total suppression of open or disguised bounties on the exportation of sugar.' It was never ratified.

rential duties. I hope, on the other hand, that we may see a further development of the free trade policy of the last forty years. I do not suppose we can spare at present the whole four millions which the tea duties yield us ; and, even if we could, it is doubtful policy to cut away entirely one of the few sources of revenue that are left ; nor is it clear to me that a working man who neither drinks nor smokes is entitled to be rewarded for his abstinence by being entirely free from taxation ; but I believe that, if we reduced those duties, say, by one-half, increased consumption would in time make up the loss, and we might very well simplify our tariff by sweeping away some petty duties, such as those on fruit.

No doubt in regard to commercial policy the sanguine anticipations of forty years ago have not been realised. It was then hoped that the world in general would be as ready as we have been to adopt the principles of free trade. That has not proved to be so, and now there are despondent persons—and I observe that those who enjoy taking gloomy views are more ready to jump at conclusions than anyone else—who say that because the promised good time has not come yet, therefore it never will come. That is, to my mind, a hasty judgment. It often happens that thoughtful writers and speakers on public affairs are quite right in the substance of their predictions, but quite wrong as to the time required for their fulfilment. Mr. Senior in his published volumes has recorded the conversation of French Liberals in the early days of the Empire. They prophesied its fall, and indicated the causes which would lead to that result ; but they expected the end to come in three or four years, whereas it really took nearly twenty years. We free traders have just in the same way been partly right and partly wrong. We indicated correctly the direction in which the world is travelling, but we have been mistaken as to the pace. It is not difficult to see the obstacles which have impeded hitherto the progress of free trade. In Europe they can be stated in a single sentence—the mutual jealousies of Governments have produced mutual fears, and mutual fears have led to these exaggerated arma-

ments which are crushing out the very life of the great Continental nations. Of course, when a Government is straining every nerve to raise money, whether by taxation or by borrowing, it is glad of any excuse to raise or to maintain duties or imports. And connected with that is another consideration, which the late M. Thiers used to put prominently forward—that of the supposed necessity for a State, which may be attacked by a combination of its neighbours, to have within its own territory at any time sufficient commodities for all its own requirements. We used to argue that ‘Peace could only be secured by the establishment of free trade;’ it is perhaps now nearer the truth to assert that free trade cannot exist until you have a policy of peace. That they will both come I have no doubt—if I doubted it I should despair of the future. We may have need of patience, but in the end we shall not be disappointed.

It is a puzzle to many people to find out how protectionist ideas have spread and flourished in what would seem the uncongenial soil of the United States. I do not profess altogether to account for the fact—for certainly there is no country which is more thoroughly possessed by the competitive idea of life—but some partial explanation may be suggested. In the first place, the Americans, with their enormous territory, have absolute free trade already over great part of a continent. In the next place, free trade has always presented itself to them as an English—that is a foreign—idea, and the curious political jealousy of England, which has not yet died out, leads them to think that in some way or another we are pressing it upon them to advance our own ends. So far from that being the case, I own that my feelings as a free trader and as an Englishman are at variance where America is concerned. We are bound to give honest advice if we give any; but when the Americans become free traders they will be far more dangerous rivals in business than they now are. In fact, I think that the desire to produce everything for themselves is a matter of feeling rather than of reasoning. They like the idea, just as a man who has a garden likes growing

his own fruit and vegetables, though he is quite aware that he could get them as good and much cheaper in the market. Then we must allow for the energy, the wealth, and the political power of the protected interests. They have more to lose than any section of their opponents has to gain ; and they know it, and act accordingly.

When it is asked, Why have our Colonies followed the American precedent rather than ours ? I should answer to that—it is too early to speak of them as if their policy were permanently fixed ; they will try a few experiments before they settle down, and it is not extraordinary that they should have been led away by the example of a country which may reasonably seem to them to bear more resemblance in its social and economical condition to theirs than England does with its small area and its ancient civilisation. Something, too, is due to that peculiar kind of intellectual antagonism—which is not in the least hostility—that impatience of dictation, or even the appearance of it, by the mother country which exists in all colonial communities, just as in private life it is apt to exist between parents and children, though they may be on very good terms. Experience will teach them in time—and nothing except experience can do it. Meanwhile, all we have got to do is to stand by our convictions ; obviously, we cannot expect other people to believe in us if we do not believe in ourselves.

You have invited me, as I gather, in order that I should speak to you on the industrial condition of the country. That is not an easy matter because of the variety of subjects which come under that comprehensive definition. There are some parts on which we may take it for granted that we are agreed. It is certain that we cannot go on increasing our population at its present rate without serious danger of such overcrowding as no country can safely bear. It is certain also that we shall be exposed to competition of increasing severity in years to come, and that one preparation which we can make to meet it—perhaps almost the only one—is so to reduce our public burdens that our successors may not be unduly weighted for the race. It is certain also that we are bound to do what we

can to render the transfer of land easy, and so to increase productive power. What else can be done, or should be done, in connection with the land is, perhaps, hardly a question for discussion here : and I pass it over with very few words.

The theory which is uppermost at present is what I may call the peasant proprietor theory—the ownership of the land in small plots by individual cultivators.¹ I should not be dealing frankly with you if I professed to accept that theory to its fullest extent. I greatly doubt whether, without exceptional capacity or exceptional opportunities, the owner of 10, 15, or even 20 acres will be able to hold his own against the competition of larger capital and better appliances, and against the temptation of ready money if he is pressed to sell. If he can hold his own, his success is a gain in every way to the community ; but in order to succeed he must keep his land free from encumbrances—if it is mortgaged to the greater part

¹ The following letter contains further remarks on this question :

33 St. James' Square, February 6, 1892.

Sir,— In answer to your question, I am in full agreement with Lord Salisbury in believing that the experiment of creating small landed properties ought to be tried, and this for more than one reason. First, because the public evidently desires that the trial should be made, and next, because, if the experiment succeeds, it will both tend to satisfy the requirements of a numerous class, and add to the value of land, which at present is lower than it ought to be. There is no question of hardship to the land-owner, nor any present need of compulsion, for estates can be bought in every county on easy terms. It remains to be seen whether very small proprietors can hold their own. They certainly have not done so in the past ; but many people hold that, being a more instructed class than in former times, they will work harder and to better purpose. It may be so ; opinions differ, and nothing will settle the dispute except bringing the matter to a practical test. I do not believe that either the creation of small holdings or that of District Councils will have much effect in diminishing the attraction which the life of great towns seems to hold out to the agricultural labourer. The same tendency is shown and the same complaint made in countries which differ widely in their social constitution. Higher wages, more varied amusements, easier access to shops, and the pleasure which many people feel in the mere presence of a crowd, are quite adequate explanations of the townward movement. The man on whom these attractions operate most strongly is not likely to be kept back by the prospect of comparative solitude and hard work on a farm of five acres.

I remain, &c.
(Signed) DERBY.

of its value, as is apt to happen, he will be worse off than a tenant who pays rent—for independence in such a position is merely nominal, and whereas a tenant in difficulty has a moral claim to indulgent treatment, the debtor must pay or quit. But having said so much, let me add that I keep my judgment in suspense—that I believe the question is one which can be settled only by actual experiment—and on that account as well as various others I should wish the experiment to have the fairest and most conclusive trial. There is no difficulty on the part of land-owners—hundreds of them wish for nothing better than to be bought out, if not wholly yet in part, and as we all know there are not hundreds but thousands of persons ready to supply capital if they see the chance of a fair return and adequate security. The only caution I would offer is this—do not let the public—above all, do not let the State, commit itself to action on a large scale in this matter, so far as England is concerned, until it has tested results on a small scale ; that is common prudence, and the matter is not one in which breathless haste is either necessary or desirable. Of course you will understand that nothing of what I have said here applies to the question of allotments, which is an entirely separate one, because the allotments are not, and cannot be, the principal dependence of those who hold them. I will not discuss here what is vaguely called the nationalisation of the land. No two people agree as to what they mean by the phrase, except that the land is to be taken from its present owners. But one may ask the promoters of such schemes—Do you mean to pay fairly for what you take, or not ? If they do, they will make a very bad bargain for the State ; if they do not, the plunder, enormous as it might be, would not be enough to make up for the shaking of public confidence which follows on every act of confiscation. Let owners once feel that they are no more secure than in Turkey or Persia, and they will be just as ready to invest capital in improvements as they are in those countries—that is, they will not do it at all.

On the vexed question of land in towns, and what is called

leasehold enfranchisement, we have had an exhaustive inquiry by a Committee of the House of Commons, ending in an inconclusive report, which perhaps fairly represents the actual state of opinion. I have only time for a passing remark upon it here. The holders of leases in towns are, as a rule, well-to-do people, quite alive to their own interest: in fact, in most cases they are builders; they have entered into their engagements with open eyes, and, generally speaking, have made a very good thing of them. I think it will require strong evidence after public inquiry before Parliament will interfere to break bargains they have deliberately entered into, and to enable them to obtain what they did not bargain for at less than the market price. Moreover, it will not encourage future owners to give leases, if a leasehold can be turned into freehold property at the option of the holder; in fact, it would put an end to leases altogether; and then we come to this, that a man who wants a house must either build or buy for himself, or hold it for a very short term only. I do not think that would contribute to public convenience. But the Legislature has a perfect right if it pleases to lay down the rule that no future leases be granted for less than 999 years, or perpetuity, and I for one should make no objection to such a restriction. That would get over all difficulties in the future as to renewals, and answer the objections as to what is called jerry-building; for if existing houses are badly built the mischief is past cure as regards them. You can only deal with building in the future, and a 999 years' lease puts a stop to all grievances arising out of the allegation that the tenant's interest is forfeited to the landlord. I think also that land-owners need not wait for Parliament to interfere. In Manchester and in these parts we have the 999 years' system; and I think owners of building land will do wisely if they introduce it elsewhere. As to leases for lives, nobody has a good word for them. But they are never granted now, and as they will die out in a few years of themselves, it seems hardly worth while to legislate about them. I believe that over unsanitary dwellings the local authorities have ample control by existing Acts. The

trouble is that they do not always care to use the power they have. But if their powers need strengthening, by all means let them be strengthened. No one has a right to make a profit out of disease, or overcrowding carried so far as to produce disease. Before I leave the land I wish to throw out one suggestion. Twenty years ago we had the wildest possible guesses as to the distribution of the soil; as to the number of persons that are owning land. Everybody admitted the importance of the question, but nobody had data to go upon. The Government of the day determined to try and clear up the mystery. They ordered an inquiry, and the result was that remarkable Blue Book which has been more often read and quoted from than any publication of the kind—the list, I mean, of land-owners which came out in 1873. It was imperfect, and not always accurate, but it brought us at least very near the truth. Now, I think, the time has come when the work then done may be revised. Twenty years will have made a good deal of difference. I believe you will find that the number of owners has largely increased; and the cost and the trouble will be much less the second time than the first.

To pass to other subjects. I suppose we all agree that with a growing population the extension of our foreign and colonial trade is to us a necessity. How is that to be brought about? You ask, and you are quite right in asking, that our diplomatists should do what is possible by negotiation. I think I may say, knowing that service pretty well from previous experience, that there is no such indifference to commercial interests either at home or abroad as is often imputed. In a case which was lately brought before me by a member of this Chamber—I mean that of our relations with Bulgaria—I have been able to ascertain what has passed, and, though not authorised to state details in public, I have satisfied myself that the British authorities are doing all that is in their power, and with hope of success. But the Chambers of Commerce may do something for themselves, and if they were willing

to send out agents from time to time to co-operate with our diplomatists and help them with their special knowledge, I think they would find that a proposal of that kind would not be badly received in Downing Street. You know better than I can do whether there is any truth in what is often said—that our producers here look rather to their own taste as to what is best than to that of the buyers abroad, and that business is lost in consequence. It would seem a simple proposition that when you go fishing you should choose your bait with reference to what the fish like, rather than to what you think they ought to like; but I cannot believe that our exporters overlook such a very elementary rule. As to colonial trade, I am afraid we have not much in our power; if our colonists like dear and bad articles of their own making rather than good and cheap ones made here, there is no help, they must have their own way; but colonial tariffs have not as yet materially checked our trade. We have many advantages over colonial producers, and with that we must be content. Only let us remember that wherever any one of us sends out or helps to send out a healthy, industrious young man to a British Colony, he is not merely doing a kind and useful act to the individual, he is providing a fresh consumer of British exports. There is great difficulty in a system of State-supported emigration, not the least being the probable resistance of the Colonies themselves; but that does not apply to emigration helped by private agency; and I doubt if money which individuals are willing to spare for public purposes can be more advantageously spent in any other way.

I have been asked to say something on the subject of technical instruction, but on that you are more capable of teaching me. I believe it is for us a necessity. I know that other towns are taking it up. I do not think it likely that Rochdale will choose to be left behind in the race; and I am told that the movement has made much progress here. But it is not enough to have buildings and teachers; the working class must take it up as a thing that concerns themselves,

and whether they will do so or not rests with them. Surely they will see their own interest, and not hold aloof.

But, gentlemen, there are other obstacles to the development of trade besides what arise from foreign competition or neglect to secure a market. We have, as I said at the beginning, to deal with the claims of labour, constantly making themselves heard more and more loudly. We cannot ignore them ; we cannot afford to treat with contempt even proposals which are demonstrably unreasonable. We must argue about many things which we were formerly content to assume, and if we do come to argument I think it is easy to show that some of the demands popularly put forward would be infinitely more injurious, if conceded, to those who make them than to any one else. Take, for instance, that which we so often hear of, the compulsory reduction of labour to eight hours a day. I pass over what appears to me the excessive injustice of forbidding one man to do his best and to earn all he can because his neighbour has less energy or fewer wants. But I ask this—does any one propose to enforce also a minimum rate of wages ? If not, the market rate of pay per ten hours being so much, you are simply knocking off 20 per cent. from the working man's wages when you reduce him by law to eight hours. That is not, I suppose, the result intended. But if it is attempted to fix by law a minimum of wages, what endless complications follow ! In the first place, if the employer does not choose to give that rate, and the employed is willing to take less, what human power can enforce the law ? In the next place, is it not rather hard on the inferior workman ? He can get taken on for, say, 3s. a day ; but the law forbids him to take less than 4s. What can follow, except that he will not be employed at all ? The good workman is earning less than he might, the inferior workman is earning nothing ; that is the outcome of the grand project for benefiting labour.

Then comes in the question of foreign competition. I do not see on what grounds you could possibly resist the demand of the employer to be protected against his rival abroad, when you force him to produce less and to pay more. The claim in

justice would be irresistible. But, I may be told, nobody is proposing to fix wages by law. Perhaps not; but if you cut down hours of labour by legal compulsion, and at the same time mean to keep up wages, you will be driven to some expedient of that kind, however absurd you may think it, and however absurd it may really be. So with many other benevolent, but not beneficent, schemes which are in the air. 'Build lodgings for all the poor to be let at the lowest price,' says one man. Well, if you do that locally, you merely attract an influx of labour, which is not wanted; if you do it generally, you undersell the people who make it their business to provide lodgings. You drive them out of the trade, and you have the whole working population of the place on your hands to find houses for. I give that only as an instance; there are many other projects to which the same principle applies. People in these days talk slightly of economical laws—but economical laws are only reason applied to a particular department of human affairs; you may ignore them if you like, as you may ignore the law of gravitation, but they will operate all the same. Popular talk did not make them, and popular talk will not unmake them. No man outside a lunatic asylum has ever said (as is now often imputed) that they ought to be taken as the sole guides of life; but no wise man will affirm, on the other hand, that they can safely be disregarded. Well, it may be asked, if you reject as useless or mischievous various popular solutions of the labour controversy, have you nothing to suggest in your turn? Certainly I have nothing new to suggest; and I should greatly distrust any man who told me that he had found an absolutely certain remedy for the disorder which we see and feel. But I have a decided opinion as to the direction in which we ought to look. What is vaguely called co-operation—profit-sharing would be a more accurate name—seems to me to give the best chance of reconciling employer and employed. It has at any rate three great advantages. It asks for no Parliamentary action—it meddles with no man's liberty—and it requires neither help nor money from the outside world. It may have been dis-

credited in early days by too big talk, as though it would fundamentally alter human nature and the conditions of society, and it may have been discredited also by being unfairly mixed up with the vagaries of poor old Robert Owen. But it has outlived prejudice, and is now more than an experiment, it is a success.

Just look at the figures of the last few years, as given in the Co-operative Year-book. In 1866 their sales were, in round numbers, to the value of $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions ; in 1876 to the value of nearly 20 millions ; in 1886 to the value of nearly 33 millions. And the other figures, with which I do not trouble you, correspond. They show real, rapid, continuous growth and, except in one year out of the last twenty-five, no falling off. I know, of course, what may be said. I know that these successes have been gained in one department of industry mainly—that of distribution—and that where production is concerned the results have been more doubtful. That proves only that there is something left to be accomplished—not that the principle is unsound. For my own part I believe in the principle. That is to say, I believe that the most effectual way of reconciling employers and employed is to give them one interest. When a man deals with the co-operative store in which he is a shareholder, he knows he will not be cheated, for why should he cheat himself ? And where the worker gains directly by the prosperity of the business he must be a hopeless idiot if he does not exert himself to the utmost of his power. I think, as I said before, that it is in that direction we must look. Further than that I do not pretend to see—but the danger before us I do see, and it is worth running some risks, and hazarding some failures, by which those who come later may profit, if thereby we can help towards the reconciliation of classes, which certainly are not now united, and which cannot injure each other without equally injuring themselves.

LXXX

MATERIAL PROGRESS OF IRELAND—LAW AND ORDER—PAYMENT OF RENT—A FEDERAL SYSTEM FOR GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

LIVERPOOL: JANUARY 16, 1890

WE may fairly do so much justice to our opponents on this Irish question as to assume that all alike desire Ireland to be prosperous, however they may differ as to the means. And do not let the fact of Irish agitation and Irish discontent, unpleasant as it is, blind us to another fact, namely, that Ireland relatively to her past position is prosperous to a remarkable degree. The level from which she started, no doubt, was a low one. Anybody who remembers what Ireland was in the days of the repeal agitation, and just before the famine, can recall a time when to live in a house of more than one room, to taste any food except potatoes, or to wear shoes and stockings, implied, at least in the south of Ireland, that you belonged to the upper classes. I can well remember—it was in the year 1844—trying to count the beggars who surrounded a Bianconi's car in a small town of the south, and being obliged to leave off after counting up to a hundred and twenty. Not that they were all, or most of them, professional mendicants, but most of the local population saw no harm and no discredit in going in for their chance of picking up an odd penny in that way. I can remember, again, a family in Tipperary who made a home for themselves by the primitive process of excavating a burrow in a steep bank, where the road ran through a cutting, filling up the front of it with sods, and leaving a hole for door, window, and chimney. You would not see anything of that kind now; and though nobody denies that the period

of transition has been one of severe suffering, I say, with perfect confidence, that there is no country in Europe in which material progress has been so rapid during the last fifty years, and that, making some exception for what are called the congested districts, the Irish peasantry are as healthy and well-nourished a race as you will find anywhere in Europe. I say, further, that all the grievances of which we used to hear so much in the days of O'Connell have absolutely disappeared. What were they—the supremacy of the State Church? That does not exist. Capricious evictions on a large scale? They are impossible. Excessive rents? Rents are regulated by judicial process. Impossibility of owning land? Why, the object which the British Government has most at heart just now is the creation of a peasant proprietary, and that is being carpentered at, and indirectly but strenuously opposed by the very people who would have been the readiest to cry out for it had it been refused.

Well, really, under those circumstances it does seem a little absurd to go on about the old immemorial traditional grievances of Ireland, the violated Treaty of Limerick 200 years ago, the penal laws and commercial restrictions of the last century, and the disabilities of Catholics, which scarcely one living man in twenty can remember to have seen in force. What are the present grievances? That which is most loudly put forward is the intolerable, the outrageous wrong done to popular sentiment because the law is actually enforced! In some cases a man illegally and bitterly persecuted is protected, and those who attempt to molest him are punished. In other cases, the tenantry on an estate, with the priest at their head, agree what is the amount of rent they choose to pay, and Irish patriots have no language strong enough to express their indignation because the land-owner and the authorities say that that is a question to be settled by a judicial decision, and that the parties shall not be judges in their own case. That is what is meant by the talk about coercion. Why, if you had a Home Rule Government in Ireland to-morrow, that Government would find itself in this difficulty: either it must

coerce on its own account, or it must declare that no debt or contract shall be enforceable by process of law. That is anarchy pure and simple—anarchy only qualified by the power of the priest. Do you think that the anarchical spirit which we know prevails in Ireland is confined to the Irish at home? Look at what has lately been passing in America. A quarrel among the Irish factions in the Western States led to murder. The murderers were apprehended and put on their trial. They, or some of them, have been happily convicted, but not until, if the story in the papers be correct, some hundred jurors had been set aside at the instance of the prosecution on the ground that they were certain to violate their oaths, and to acquit the prisoners against the evidence. Is not that Cork or Tipperary over again? Well, when men carry into a new country, where they have not a shadow of a grievance, that sort of defiance and hostility to the law, that determination to be a law for themselves, can you place much confidence in their judgment or fairness when they complain of its administration at home? But I think we ought not to play into the hands of our opponents by allowing these questions of the justice of convictions or the severity of magistrates' sentences to be mixed up with the constitutional question of Home Rule. Suppose that by some unexpected chance the agitators were in some cases accurate in their statements and right in their conclusions, what would that prove? It might prove that a magistrate had exceeded or abused his powers, and that somebody else should be put in his place. It might prove even that men with more legal training should be substituted for lay magistrates. But what has that to do with creating a new Legislature for Ireland? What is there in questions of this kind that Parliament is not competent to deal with? The Irish Members have been themselves the chief obstacle to careful and impartial inquiry into grievances of that kind. They have got up so many absolutely unfounded complaints; they have put forward so many accusations which melted into air when put to the test, that undoubtedly they have created a prejudice which did

not exist before. We can only judge by past experience, and when nine stories of cruelty and injustice out of ten have been shown to be imaginary, there is no doubt a chance, a possibility, that the tenth case may be a real one, but that it will be listened to with a strong *à priori* inclination to disbelieve it. In that respect they have cut a rod for their own backs. That any other prejudice exists against them in the English Parliament I do not believe, and I have never seen the slightest evidence of it.

Now, we understand that the Irish measure of the year is to be a Land Bill, and of course that bill cannot be discussed until we know its terms ; but I have no hesitation in saying that some measure of the kind is wanted, and that in the actual circumstances of the country we are bound to choose the lesser of two evils, and to overlook objections which at other times might be serious. It is argued that the tenants may combine in a refusal to pay the annual sum required for interest and instalments. They certainly may ; it is a possibility, but I do not think that those who have already repaid part of their debt will readily incur the risk of losing their land by refusing to pay the rest. After all, the Government is bound to enforce the payment of a fair rent to private owners. Its obligation is not increased by the fact that it is itself a creditor ; and I cannot conceive that in England, at least, there will be any sympathy with men who voluntarily call on the State to help them to become owners—who are helped in a large and liberal way—who get their farms upon terms more favourable than they could possibly have anticipated, and who then turn round and say, ‘No, the land is ours by right, and we will keep it without paying for it.’ There is one advantage about the plan of selling to the tenants which, in the actual state of the country, I think important. Its adoption on a large scale is a heavy blow to all those fantastic schemes of what is called land nationalisation, which in plain English means robbery. You may trust the owner of 10 or 20, 50 or 100 acres to defend the rights of property as effectually as if he owned 1,000 or 10,000 ; and no force is

to be despised as things are now in Ireland which is likely to be exerted in the cause of honesty and law.

As to the constitutional question (which is really the question at issue), after all, though perpetual attempts are made to mix it up with irrelevant or unimportant details, I think we can all see that it has passed into a new phase. The ideas of 1886 are out of date. The bill of 1886 was in effect a plan for treating Ireland as a colony. Opinion manifestly declared against that. Then came the modification of allowing the Irish Members to continue to sit in Parliament, although Parliament was to have nothing to do with Irish affairs. That made nonsense of the whole proposal, and it was fairly blown out of the water by the fire of criticism directed against it. It is safe to say that of that plan also we have heard the last. Since then the Home Rulers have been cautious about committing themselves; but, so far as they have spoken intelligibly, they seem now to recognise the fact that you cannot combine a federal with a Parliamentary system. What they lean to now is a federal system, pure and simple—a system under which England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales shall form separate and self-governing members of a federation similar, in general outline, to that of the United States. Now, I never wish to argue unfairly, and I am bound to admit that this last development of the Home Rule theory is far less unreasonable than its predecessors. It is not in itself absurd; it is not absolutely impracticable; it is not open to the criticism that it would, like the schemes which it has superseded, produce absolute confusion, and end in a deadlock. No doubt the federal system can be made to work. Switzerland on a small scale, and the United States on a large scale, have both proved that; but I think it is open to objections hardly less serious, though of a different kind. In the first place, its adoption would be a revolution such as we have never known in England. It would utterly upset the two most real and important of our institutions, the House of Commons and the Cabinet. It would put an end to the House of Commons, for what you would have would be first an

Imperial Council dealing with foreign, colonial, and Indian affairs, with defence, and with Imperial finance ; next, a merely local English Assembly, like a State Legislature in America, all-powerful as regards local legislation, but unable to touch any Imperial question. Neither of these bodies, both so limited in their functions, could possibly possess the influence or the power of Parliament as we now have it. Authority so divided would be frittered away. There would be no one central body to which everybody could look as the guide and test of opinion. Exactly the same thing would hold good of the Cabinet. At present the same dozen men are held responsible for the entire conduct of public affairs ; but a system under which the Secretary for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary for War should be responsible to one body, the Home Secretary to another body, each absolutely independent of the other, and in which the two sets of authorities, Imperial and local, would not even sit together as colleagues, would utterly destroy that unity of administration which we believe to be necessary for administrative efficiency. Whether the difficulties and inconveniences of such a system can be made clearly intelligible to the mass of the electors I do not know, but I am sure they must be very obvious to Mr. Gladstone and to the able men who have followed his lead. There is another difficulty of a different kind. Suppose England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland to be federally united ; how are they to be represented in the Council which is common to them all ? Nobody would seriously propose that they should each have the same number of votes ; that would be too absurd when you have twenty-five millions in one State, and two millions in another. Then, is representation to be proportionate to population ? That is fair and reasonable ; but in that case the whole system becomes a farce, because the English vote will outweigh all the rest put together. Scotch, Irish, and Welsh Members may talk as they please, but they will be in a hopeless and permanent minority. I see no escape from these two alternatives, one absurd, the other objectionable, unless, indeed,

it is proposed to cut up England into half a dozen States, a proposal which has not yet been made, and which, I think, would hardly commend itself to patriotic feeling. I put forward that little puzzle for our Home Rule friends to solve. There may be a solution, but, if they are to find it, they must give us more reasoning and less rhetoric than has been common in their speeches of late. They are in a difficulty. If they do not bring a plan forward they will hardly rouse enthusiasm on behalf of an unknown and undeclared policy. If they do, they will give us something to criticise, and I hope we shall discharge that duty with fairness indeed, but carefully and thoroughly, and that we shall not allow phrases to be substituted for argument, or assertions to be taken for proof.

LXXXI

THE MITIGATION OF THE SMOKE NUISANCE.

LONDON : MAY 22, 1890

I HAVE been asked to take part in this meeting, and I could not refuse, for, living much in a part of the country where we see the sun much seldomer than we ought, and where one is apt to blacken one's fingers in gathering a flower or a leaf, I naturally wish to find some public interest excited in the suppression or decrease of a nuisance by which all my neighbours suffer, and those suffer most who cannot afford to move. The diminution of smoke, and its necessary accompaniment, dirt, is a matter which concerns everybody except those fortunate persons who live entirely away from great towns. I wish I could add that it interests everybody ; but as a matter of fact it does not, and that is really the chief difficulty with which we have to contend. In this country, where almost unequalled mechanical skill has unbounded capital available to employ it, very few public wants are likely to remain unsupplied when they are once felt to be wants. Canals came when traffic had become too heavy for the roads, railways came when canals were felt to be too slow, gas replaced oil, and electricity is replacing gas, because people have begun to appreciate effective lighting ; and the problem which we now have to solve, that of comparatively smokeless fuel, is certainly not more difficult to deal with than those to which I have referred.

The trouble is that there is no strong feeling on the subject either here or in the manufacturing districts. We most of us bear patiently what we have got used to, and end by accepting it as a law of nature. I do not believe that the

most polluted air, or the destruction of vegetation, has any effect in driving away labour. In towns like Wigan, which is the centre of a coal-field, or Runcorn, or Widnes, where chemical vapours of a very unpleasant kind penetrate into every room of every house, the population seems to me to accept the conditions of life as though they were normal and necessary. The large employer does not live on the spot, the workmen get good wages, and, of course, if the residents do not care to exert themselves, nobody else is likely to take up the matter. I dwell upon that because I believe indifference is in this matter, as in many others, the chief evil which we have to encounter. As to the extent of the smoke nuisance we all know how the facts stand. The area affected is very large ; but the population affected is much greater in proportion, because the districts which suffer are precisely those which contain the largest number of inhabitants to the square mile. You have pure air where there are few people to enjoy it ; you have polluted air where many people are obliged to breathe it. Nor is there any chance of the annoyance coming to a natural end unless our manufacturing industries were to collapse, which would mean starvation to millions and general impoverishment to the country. Now, this expenditure of fuel in creating dirt is an injury in various ways. It is, in the first place, a waste of the fuel itself. There has been great improvement, no doubt ; but the quantity used to generate a certain amount of heat and power is still enormously in excess of what, according to theory, it ought to be. In the next place, the waste caused by perpetual dirt is in itself not inconsiderable. The discomfort we all know, and can judge of for ourselves. The injury to health is variously estimated. I doubt whether healthy adults suffer much from it, but children and delicate persons certainly do. Then, when cleanliness has become difficult and laborious, to say the least, the temptation is great to give up the attempt to maintain it. And, lastly, the injury to vegetation is no trifling loss in every way. I know many Lancashire houses in or close to great towns in whose gardens scarcely

a flower can be grown, and fruit is of course out of the question.

If we must pay this price for manufacturing supremacy, be it so. I am not here to contend that the object is not worth the sacrifice; but I do not believe there is any 'must' in the case. I do believe that more than three-fourths, possibly nine-tenths, of the smoke from collieries or manufactoryes of all kinds is absolutely unnecessary and preventible. But there will be some trouble and some outlay at first. The thing will not do itself; it must be the result of strong pressure from public opinion, and that opinion we want to create, or, if it exists already, to strengthen. The matter would be easy enough if any capital could be got out of the movement for any political party, or even if any class feeling could be appealed to; but in this case there is no impulse of that kind possible. What we want to do is everybody's business, and that is the reason why it has been nobody's business. Let me add that, in my part of the country at least, it is not the smoke produced by domestic fires, it is the smoke of collieries, mills, and works of various kinds that is the great offender. Let me add that it would be exaggerating the state of the case if I were to speak as if nothing had been done here and there, but not uniformly, or in all places, and naturally A will not put himself to trouble and expense to keep down his smoke if B and C, within a mile or two of him, are allowed to dirty the air at their pleasure. I do not know that we want more stringent legislation. Possibly we do, but before we get it, or even ask for it, let us try the experiment fairly of enforcing the laws which we have. There is much to be done in that way in almost every place that I know. But there is one necessary preliminary step, which is to show that the law can be obeyed, and that without extraordinary cost or trouble. Now, that is the work which such a committee as this can do. This Society has been warmly supported in Manchester, and, I believe, in other northern towns, and Londoners have nearly, though not quite, as much reason for taking it up. We have many of the most repre-

sentative names in Lancashire on the list of our contributors ; why should it not be the same here ? I only know of one industry which can be reasonably hostile to us. I do not think we can expect the soap-makers to be very cordial ; and yet, even as to them, I hardly know, because, though we may lessen the quantity of dirt to be got rid of, we shall certainly increase the desire to get rid of what remains. Since this meeting was called I have had a visit from a tenant on my own estate, who rents collieries from me, and he declared that for thirteen years he has worked on the principle of suppressing smoke entirely, that he has found it practicable, and, more than that, that he has made it pay. Let us have more cases of the same kind brought forward. If we only say the thing can be done, that is a matter of opinion, and we may be contradicted ; if we are able to say the thing has been done, and to prove it, that is a matter of fact, and no contradiction is possible.

LXXXII

THE STUDY OF SCIENCE

LIVERPOOL : SEPTEMBER 26, 1890

. . . THE necessity of technical instruction, if our workmen are to hold their own against foreign rivals, is a commonplace of the platform ; but we must not forget that there are other objects to be served, less pressing—some would say less practical—yet in their ultimate results surely not less important. You will not expect from me, who can claim no relation to science except that of a respectful admirer and in some very humble degree a student, a disquisition on the use and value of scientific training ; but some facts are clear, and need no special gift of observation to detect them. Ours will be remembered as pre-eminently the age of science, I might say throughout the civilised world, but more especially in England. In literature our age has done well, but we can scarcely, perhaps, claim to rival the generation which gave us Shakespeare and Bacon. In politics we cannot judge the work of our own time. We are too near it, and we have not seen the end ; but the changes of our day, many and important as they are, can scarcely be set alongside the reformation of the sixteenth, or the civil wars and revolutions of the seventeenth, century. I speak here not as judging any of these movements, but only as weighing their relative magnitude and importance. In regard of wars and of conquests, happily we have little in the last fifty years to look back upon. But the triumphs of applied science in our day are the veriest commonplace. To dwell upon them would be absurd, and in such matters one success leads to another. More than that, spread as civilisation is over the whole earth, there is no fear of such a reaction of

barbarism and ignorance as that which followed the decadence of the Roman Empire. In this one respect I think we may praise ourselves without fear of seeming ridiculous to the next generation.

Our successors may excel us as writers, as politicians, as soldiers ; they may surpass even the industrial energies of the present time, but it is not likely—it is scarcely possible—that in the region of science the twentieth century should witness advances greater than, or as great as, those of the nineteenth. The general experience of the world hitherto has been that brilliant, but brief, epochs of advance have been followed by long intervals of stagnation, and sometimes even of retrogression. Retrogression is not likely, as I said just now, but stagnation is quite possible. There is one phrase much employed when people talk on these subjects, which, to my mind, contains a fallacy. I mean the common phrase of popularising science. Now, to popularise science is simply impossible. You may give everybody an opportunity of learning, but not everybody will or can take advantage of it. You may popularise the results of science, but that is quite a different matter. As an old saying runs, there is no royal road to mathematics. Anybody could cram up, with the help of an average memory and of easily acquired handbooks, a summary of what has been done in astronomy, in chemistry, or other sciences ; but when that result is accomplished he will be very little nearer to any real gain which science could bring to him. It is only labour and perseverance, added to natural capacity, that can give a scientific mind. Fortunately, not everybody is required to have it. I have no doubt a man may be a good workman, a good clerk, a good man of business, and discharge all the duties of life in a satisfactory way, although he believes that the sun goes round the earth and that the moon and stars are lighted up at night to enable mankind to see their way. We cannot all be what the hideous slang of the day describes as ‘scientists,’ any more than we can all be poets ; but I think the answer was a good one, which was given long ago, to the objection, ‘ You want to make your pupil Jack of all trades, and

master of none.' 'No,' was the reply, 'I want him to be Jack of all trades, and master of one.' Nobody is required, nor indeed is it usually possible, to make a serious study of more than one profession ; but just as it is good to have a taste for books, though we may not wish to become authors, and to have a love of pictures, though we may never intend to paint, so it is desirable to have a sympathetic insight into studies alien from our own. Time is not wasted in that way, for there are very few people a good deal of whose time does not run to waste ; and when they talk of want of time it is really, nine times out of ten, want of energy that they mean. No doubt much labour is monotonous and wearisome, but those who have tried the experiment will tell you that, given a reasonable degree of bodily health and mental activity, the best repose from monotonous labour is to be found in change of occupation, not in absolute apathy and vacancy, and that is one reason why, in my judgment, some tincture of scientific knowledge is desirable for every educated person ; the result may not be great, but the process is valuable. An entire absence of the scientific spirit is no doubt compatible with brilliant talent and high distinction. You do not find fault for a deficiency of that kind in a novelist, a poet, or a writer of light literature, but it is a deficiency notwithstanding.

If you ask me what I mean by a scientific spirit, I think I know, but I must confess that it is more easily described in vague and general terms than precisely defined. I mean by it, in the first place, a habit of accuracy and exactness in matters of fact. It matters very little to an orator that his facts should be carefully verified—sometimes he is wise in abstaining from the attempt—but a calculation or an experiment must inevitably fail if there is a want of accuracy anywhere. In the next place, I mean that temper of mind which seeks for conclusions, but does not jump at them ; which is equally opposed to the stupid incredulity of ignorance, refusing to accept any idea which is not familiar ; to the reverential credulity which accepts as true any statement coming down from old or high authority ; and to the careless indifferentism

which, so long as a theory looks and sounds well, and especially if it flatters some previously existing feeling or prejudice, does not care on what foundation of reality that theory rests. Ours is an age when the half-educated are a power in the world ; when more men than ever before reason and speculate on difficult matters, and when, consequently, there is all round us and on all subjects a quite bewildering amount of loose talk and inconclusive argument. More than that, there are fashions in opinion, and you constantly hear it said, ‘ Oh, yes, that was the way people reasoned twenty years ago, but it is quite out of date now.’ Well, such fluctuations, I suppose, must exist in what are called practical affairs, but that is all the more reason why it is good to have to do with theories that cannot go out of fashion, and with truths that are absolutely incapable of being affected by the ebb and flow of what is called public opinion. Else we should be apt to rest in the conclusion that nothing is true and nothing false, and that the best thing to do is simply to accept the current ideas of the day, which, indeed, from the point of view of personal interest, very likely for most of us is the best thing. That the world is governed by laws which we did not make and cannot abolish—laws which will operate whether we recognise or ignore them, and which it is our wisdom, therefore, to study that we may obey, and in obeying utilise them—that is what I take to be the outcome of scientific teaching, and if anybody thinks that a useless or an unimportant or unnecessary lesson I do not agree with him. Something else science rightly understood will teach us : to know what it is that we can hope to know and to understand ; and to recognise how little that is, and how much lies, and probably always will lie, beyond the reach of our faculties.

One word only I will add—that, having known men of many professions, I should say, as far as my observation goes, that the happiest lives are those which have been devoted to science. Every step is interesting, and the success of those who do succeed is lasting. What general, what orator, what statesman, what man of letters, can hope to leave a memory

like that of Darwin ? An invalid in health—a man who seldom stirred from home—a man until his later years very little known to the outer world, but who, from his quiet study, revolutionised the thought of Europe, and will be remembered as long as Newton and Bacon. If fame be ever worth working for—I do not say it is—that kind of fame is surely, of all, the most durable and the most desirable. I have perhaps digressed from our proper subject, for it is not likely that we have a future Darwin in this room ; but it is no exaggeration to say that, as a rule, no man who has taken to science as the work of his life regrets the choice, while men who have done important work in other lines feel like Renan, who, at the height of his literary eminence, tells us in his autobiography that he has often regretted that science rather than historical research had not been the object of his early pursuit. Nothing remains for me now except to offer to this School of Science my sincere good wishes for its future prosperity, and to you, the successful students who are attending here to receive your prizes, my congratulations on the good beginning which you have made, and my hope that neither early success nor possible temporary failure may induce you to desist from those steady, unhasting, unresting exertions without which the great prizes of life can never be attained.

LXXXIII

THE DISTRIBUTION OF CHARITY—THE EMIGRATION OF CHILDREN—THREE FORMS OF CHARITY

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF FRIENDS OF THE SHELTERING HOME FOR ORPHANS AND DESTITUTE CHILDREN, LIVERPOOL : DECEMBER 29, 1890

I AM glad to see that neither the time of year nor the weather has prevented a considerable gathering here. But had it even been much smaller, there would have been consolation in the fact that what is said in this room, even if it reaches the ears of comparatively few, reaches the eyes of many. Whoever stands on a Liverpool platform addresses an audience immeasurably larger than any hall could contain. You have heard from Mrs. Birt the teachings of experience ; from me you can get only theory. I was asked some time ago to attend this meeting and say something in support of this institution, and I have consented to do so very willingly, but I did not consent until I had gone through its earlier reports and the various statements put forward on its behalf, and satisfied myself that it is not merely a benevolent undertaking—that is very doubtful praise, like saying of a man that he has good intentions—but also that it is a beneficent undertaking, which is quite a different matter. It is a very old commonplace, but not less true for that, that charity often creates more distress in the long run than it relieves at the moment. There are still persons, perhaps, to whom that may seem a paradox, invented in the interest of mean and parsimonious people ; but no man will think it so who has closely watched the effects of careless and impulsive giving. Probably, as this world is constituted, it is scarcely possible to distribute large sums without doing along with the good effected a certain proportion of harm.

We cannot escape from these conditions of human existence ; but what we can do is to see that the good result shall be as great and permanent, and the accompanying harm, if any, as slight, as is possible under the circumstances. For instance, even the safest of all ordinary charities—a well-administered hospital—is so far liable to abuse that patients get admission to it who could afford to pay for themselves, and it is said that if a local school be liberally endowed, the principal gainers are those who own or occupy houses in the immediate neighbourhood, because parents will flock into the district where their children will be well and cheaply educated. Or, to take another case, I believe there is no doubt that in London, when public attention some years ago was called to the state of one particular district in the East-end and a rush of contributions for the relief of the inhabitants followed, the immediate effect was that the rents of all lodgings in that district rose, because those who took them reckoned on coming in for a share of the good things that were going.

I dwell on this point, you may perhaps think too strongly and too long, because I am well assured that in these days the danger is not on the side of indifference to distress, but of thoughtlessness as to the best way of dealing with it. When people give largely either to relieve their own consciences, or because everybody tells them that it is their duty to give largely, they are apt to think very little of what becomes of the money they have parted with. It is enough for them that they have shown unselfishness in giving it ; to tell them to take trouble in addition would be asking too much. The money is no longer in their hands, and they do not feel responsible for it. Now, that is a mischievous fallacy, because it ignores the painful but quite indisputable fact that of all the evil that exists in the world a very large proportion has been caused by persons who thought they were doing good. We want good sense as much as good feeling. I believe this home to be as nearly free from danger of abuse as any form of charity can be. No doubt there is one danger to guard against—that of relieving worthless or careless parents from their natural duty of looking after

the children whom they have brought into the world. But there is a large class of children in whose case that kind of parent does not exist—orphans, children of widows, or others too poor to maintain them (I fear they are many), or children of parents who have deserted them, or of parents who are suffering the penalties of breaking the law or who are not to be found. And let this be borne in mind, that wherever there is wanton and wilful neglect on the part of the parent, the law can and does interfere and punishes the offence. I am not denying that there is need of watchfulness in the choice of cases to be dealt with ; but I think that, with proper care and discrimination, it is quite possible so to work a charity like this that no father or mother shall be enabled by it to escape from their duty to their children and to society.

So much for the class of children for whom it is sought to provide. Now as to the means of providing for them. It would be mere waste of time to expatiate on the advantages of emigration. We are, and we must be, an emigrating country. With our small area and growing population we have no choice in the matter ; we cannot employ or feed 400,000 more human beings every year. No doubt emigration is only a palliative. No doubt it would be well for us if population did not increase at so rapid a rate. But we must deal with the world as we find it, and I do not hesitate to say that to dispose in some way of the growing swarms of the poorest class is not a matter of humanity only, but one also of public safety. Well, how is that to be done ? Large schemes of colonisation have often been promoted, but they have never succeeded yet, and probably they never will. The enormous cost in comparison to the result accomplished is alone an almost fatal objection. Individual emigrants may be helped out, either by relatives or friends or by the aid of Societies ; but where grown-up men are concerned, that can only be done with care and caution, and if the poorest and least able to get on at home are selected to be sent out, you will very soon have complaints from the Colonies of the labour market being unduly interfered with. You have, moreover, the old, never-

ceasing difficulty that the people whom England is most willing to spare are not those whom the Colonies are most willing to receive. I do not, of course, affirm that these difficulties cannot be overcome ; I say only that they are difficulties not to be ignored or underrated. But I do not believe that any Colony has ever objected to the class of emigrants whom it is the object of this institution to send out—boys and girls. There is a demand for them everywhere—girls especially, if they will fit themselves for domestic service, which is one of the most crying wants of an undeveloped country. But, whether boys or girls, they have chances which an adult has not. They excite no jealousy ; they are valued as being useful by the very people who would resent the importation of adult labour ; and, going out at an age when habits are still unformed, they can adapt themselves to new conditions more readily than a grown man or woman could do.

But we need not theorise on this point, because we have evidence as to what Canada actually thinks and feels. In the report of one of our meetings, held not very long ago, I find the following statement : ‘The average applications received from Canada during the past few years have been 1,000.’ And as I believe not more than 200, if as many, get sent out in any one year, there is no danger of overstocking the market. The benefit to the children themselves is too obvious to dwell upon. Even an African or Australian savage hardly leads so wretched a life as that of a young boy or girl running loose, trying to pick up a living in the streets of a great town. And, on the other hand, the life of a Colony—which has drawbacks, no doubt, for educated persons and for those who leave happy homes behind them which they will never see again—that life to a street Arab is a distinct improvement in his condition even at first. He may have hard work to do, but it is healthy work ; he lives in pure air, he has plenty of wholesome food, and he has before him the prospect of independence and of rising in the world. What is more, under the arrangements which this Society makes he is never

uncared for. He is not sent out until there is a place where he can be received, and until there are friends ready to receive him. He does not lose a home—which, in fact, in most cases he has never had ; he finds one. No doubt, before he is fit for colonial life he requires training—and that training, I understand, is given here, so that no boy, or girl either, shall go out until there is a reasonable certainty that he or she has acquired the habits of cleanliness, of obedience to discipline, and of industry. One great recommendation, to my mind, of this system is its cheapness in proportion to the result obtained. I see it stated that 15*l.* will cover the whole cost of taking in a child, training it in a home here, and sending it to Canada, where it will be self-supporting. Compare that estimate with the cost of refuges, homes, industrial schools, and similar institutions in this country, and then consider whether 15*l.* is a heavy price to pay for a life rescued from poverty, vagrancy, and very probably from crime. I have never heard but one objection made to the system which seemed to me to have any real weight. It is sometimes urged, ‘ Why be at such trouble to take a certain number of vagrant or neglected children out of the streets, when you know that their place will only be filled up by others ? ’ To that I answer, there is no necessity why their place should be so taken. It cannot be a law of nature that a certain number of children in every great town should run about wild and half-starved. Stop the leak in the ship’s bottom by all means, but while you do that you must also pump out the water that has got in already. Vagrancy and pauperism perpetuate themselves ; they will not grow up again so easily where they once have ceased to exist. And it is mere foolishness to say, if we cannot root out a public nuisance and danger altogether, that we will do nothing to diminish it. In all human affairs there are ten cases which admit of palliatives to one which admits of cure.

One last remark only I would add. Of all useful charities (I set aside those that are wasted, or worse than wasted), there are three degrees. The lowest—good in its way—is

when you help a man over some immediate difficulty or distress, doing nothing for his future. That is all right, but the result is not permanent. The next grade is that kind of assistance which you give when you place the person helped in such a position that he can help himself for the future. And the highest and best form of charity is that which not only enables him to help himself, but to pass on to others at a later date the assistance which he has received. And that is what we do here. Not only is the child who is sent out started in life with every chance of success, but he adds to the number of our colonists, to the employers of British capital, to the consumers of British products, and so to the welfare and prosperity of those whom he leaves behind. That is a really valid plea—not the less so because it appeals to men's reason rather than their impulses. One thing more I ask you to bear in mind. We are constantly appealed to in these days to give our names and our means to new and sometimes sensational plans of philanthropy. Now, I am not here to dissuade anybody from helping any scheme of the soundness of which he or she is satisfied; but people may perhaps be warned not to let good work which is now being done languish and fail because some newer project has laid hold of the popular imagination. Help the novelty if you please and think right, but do not help it at the cost of old and well-tried institutions. I believe in the institution which we are discussing to-day. I believe it to be sound in principle and well administered in practice; and I therefore cordially recommend it to the support of the Liverpool community, of whom for present purposes I count myself as one.

LXXXIV

*EDUCATION—EXAMINATIONS—CONTINUATION
SCHOOLS—KNOWLEDGE—SUCCESS IN LIFE*

BURY : JANUARY 28, 1891

It is always a pleasure to meet my friends and neighbours of Bury, and there is in Bury no place where I meet them with more satisfaction than here, not only because thirty-eight years ago I had the honour of addressing a similar audience in this room, but because at a still earlier date my father before me took a warm interest in the success of this Athenæum, and either laid the first stone or presided at the formal opening, in days which now seem to us far distant. For those were days when Macaulay's History was still only half written, when Wellington was still with us as a living presence, and when the figure of Peel, though just disappearing from the scene, was still the most prominent in political life. We seem since then to have passed through a long experience of life, and yet it is only forty years—much in the history of an individual, nothing in that of a nation. We have gained a good deal since then—of that there can be no reasonable doubt—but perhaps we have also lost something. I do not recognise in the literature or hear in the talk of the present day that tone of confident optimism which distinguished the years in which I first knew public affairs—the years between 1840 and 1850. Everybody then seemed so very sure that, given a few changes which would come about almost of themselves, the world was going to be a different place; wars were to cease, for democracy was to triumph, and democracy was sure to be peaceable. Free trade would spread from England over the whole earth. Education would make everybody wise, and the quarrels and follies of the past would

soon be mere memories. I do not think we are so sanguine now. Experience has done its work; we have learnt that even with improved conditions of life—and those undoubtedly we have—there is a good deal of human nature left in man. We do not quite say, in the untranslatable language of the Frenchman, the more changes there are, the more things remain the same, but we recognise the fact that neither voting powers nor schools have sufficed to make the world an earthly paradise; that it is well to have disposed of the grievances and the difficulties of the last generation, but that we have disposed of them only to find ourselves confronted by others not less serious, and not less needing solution. If that is true generally, it is certainly true in educational matters. We teach everybody; we oblige everybody to learn as far as possible up to a certain point, and no doubt the present is a more cultivated and intelligent age than the last. But it is a less satisfactory reflection to consider how much of the seed that has been sown never goes into the ground at all; how much of the mental food that our authorities not merely prepare, but stand by and see swallowed, is never assimilated, and in many cases seems to produce only nausea and indigestion. Well, I suppose we must make up our minds to that. Nature is wasteful, and we must not complain if we find that a good deal of honest and earnest effort is, in appearance at least, thrown away. It is something that every child is able to read, even if three out of four do so either to very little purpose or not at all. It is something that the opportunity of self-improvement should be given, even if it is not always, or possibly not often, made use of. At least the State will have done its duty, and each generation may be expected to show some advance over the last. We have provided, I suppose, pretty well for primary education.

I sometimes think that, in one respect, we have done too much, or rather perhaps that we have not been working on the right lines. I speak with doubt and deference, but it does seem to me that our schools try to teach more than is possible

in the time allowed, and that the consequent haste and effort, and the reaction, which inevitably follow may do more to disgust boys and girls with books, to make them non-readers in later life, than the little increase of early acquired knowledge is worth. For my own part, I would rather that a lad should leave school comparatively ignorant, but fond of reading and keen to acquire knowledge, than that he should do so in the condition, not unfrequent, of a person who has just gone through an examination—glad that the cramming business is over, and determined, if he can help himself, never to go through anything like it again. Do not misunderstand me. I have nothing to say against examinations, but, on the contrary, a good deal to say in their favour. They are eminently useful in their way, especially as applied to the public service. They check jobbery, they save us from a good deal of political corruption, they keep out the blockheads and the idlers, and they supply a rough test, not of intellectual capacity by itself, nor of industry by itself, but of that combination of the two which is wanted for practical success in life. But, like other good things, they have their drawbacks. They do, I think, tend to destroy the ideal of the genuine student, the love of knowledge for its own sake. They do cause an undue stress to be laid on the most mechanical of all intellectual faculties—that of memory, and, of course, they do not give any corresponding development of the more important faculty of judgment. As to the alleged danger of too great pressure on the brain whilst still undeveloped, I do not contend in the face of high medical authorities that it is absolutely imaginary, but I think it is exaggerated. Those who break down in training are generally either those who would anyhow have broken down later on, or else those who have tried hard to make up by a short spell of excessive labour for having taken things too easily in the beginning. To some thinkers examinations seem undesirable because they promote the principle of individual competition—man against man. I cannot say that I see much in that objection. Life is a struggle; always has been, and always must be; and in England at least we think that struggle is better than stagnation.

tion. Even the very societies which are established to develop the principle of co-operation as against competition, societies which have been very useful and very successful, are of necessity competing against one another, and against the whole world. Parliamentary life and life at the Bar are one long competition. Even our games are mostly competitive, and it is an old remark that an Englishman is seldom satisfied with his amusements until he has made them as like a business as he can.

Let me next say a word about what I think is the last educational development. I mean the continuation schools, as they are called, which take up young people at the time when ordinary primary schools let them go. I think that an eminently useful movement, partly on the simple and homely ground that it keeps young folks out of mischief at the most dangerous age ; partly because it gives them a chance of acquiring knowledge and cultivation which they could not acquire as children, and perhaps in most cases would not care to acquire in later life. It is, in fact, only a revival in a new form of the old movement which led to the formation of institutes such as this. Many of them succeeded wholly or partially, but many failed for a reason which does not now operate—because the groundwork of good primary schooling did not then exist. . . . Well, I may be asked—one often asks it of oneself on such occasions—what is all this machinery of schools and evening classes and institutes meant to do ? What result do you expect to produce ? And to that I do not see that any single answer could be given. We want various things, not incompatible with one another ; mutually helpful, yet not identical. We want good and useful servants for the State. We know very well that instruction does not necessarily give wisdom ; yet we think that it places some check on wild and impracticable ideas, and that those classes which have political power in their hands should have some ideas as to how their power ought to be used. Again, we want men so trained for professions and industrial occupations of all sorts that we in England shall not be in a position of

inferiority to other countries. We want men rescued, for the sake of society generally quite as much as for their own, from the temptation to silly, and wasteful, and vicious forms of pleasure, by supplying them with other sources of amusement which are, to put it at the lowest, neither costly nor hurtful. And, inasmuch as we are not Orientals, nor pessimists, who think life itself a mistake (at least I do not believe that doctrine to be popular in England), we think that to augment the sum of intellectual activity in the human race is, on the whole, to increase human happiness, and therefore is desirable. I am aware that that last proposition is not absolutely undisputed. It is an old saying that he that increases knowledge increases sorrow; but that is an Asiatic, not a European, view of the case. The general tendency of human experience is the other way, and though it is arguable that a street sweeper who can neither read nor write, or a savage in the wilderness, may be happier than a philosopher, I do not know the philosopher who, if it could be brought to the test, would consent to change places.

Then, again, it is sometimes said you are making people discontented with all this teaching, because you are giving them tastes which they cannot gratify. Well, I do not treat that objection with contempt. There is something in it. It points to a possible danger, but the answer is, I think, sufficient. In the first place, not all desirable tastes are costly and not all discontent is undesirable. In the next place, you will have the discontent whether you have the teaching or not, and though book-learning is not always nor necessarily wisdom, yet, of the two, utter ignorance is more liable to be duped, more liable to be used as an instrument for mischief-makers to play upon, than even partial and imperfect knowledge. We have difficulties ahead with labour questions and the like, but none which we may not surmount if we only keep our eyes and ears open and our heads cool. Disputes between employers and employed are nothing new, and I do not see why exceptional treatment for them should be more required now than in the past.

I have only one more word to add, and it is addressed equally to those who are coming up this evening to receive their prizes and to those who have tried for them but failed. To the one I say, do not be over-confident ; to the others, do not despond. Life is a long race in which success depends much more on staying power than on speed. I should never despair of a young fellow's chances only because he was or seemed to be a little slower than his neighbours. A blunt knife will cut as well as a sharp one, only you must press upon it harder ; but I should put a very big black mark against any youth whom I heard say, 'I can't do this ; it is too much trouble,' or still worse, 'It does not interest or amuse me.' It was said long ago that the first requisite for public life was to have the patience of a camel, and that whoever wanted to succeed in the law must live like a hermit and work like a horse. There is truth, I believe, in both sayings, and they apply to other pursuits besides politics and law. I do not believe that this generation has retrograded in any direction ; but if it has a weak point, it is perhaps that we expect more in the way of amusement, and are less patient of what is dull and disagreeable. I hope in that respect I may be wrong. Hard work made England what it is, and hard work will be needed to keep England what it is. I will preach to you no more, and will end with hearty good wishes for the success of this Institution.

LXXXV

JOHN BRIGHT

ON THE UNVEILING OF MR. BRIGHT'S STATUE, MANCHESTER :
OCTOBER 18, 1891

THE duty which devolves upon me now is both honourable and agreeable. I ask you to join in paying honour to the memory of a man who was remarkable in his day, who was during many years more praised and more abused than is the fate of any except a few, but who needs no statue to keep him in the memory of his countrymen, for he has written his name in large and durable letters on the history of England.

The name of John Bright is known among all English-speaking people, in America and in the Colonies as well as in Great Britain. But we in Lancashire claim him specially, not merely because he was born and bred among us, but because he embodied in a peculiar degree those qualities which are usually held to be characteristic of Lancashire—strong and clear opinions, determined purpose, and plain uncompromising speech. Among the subscribers to this statue are reckoned men of various political parties, and that is right. They include, I have no doubt, many who may not hold that the political results of John Bright's action are or will be unmixed good, but who can separate character from opinion, and can respect, where they find it, sincerity and simplicity of purpose and a disinterested desire for the public weal. To these qualities, even in the heat of party disputes, few, if any, persons have doubted John Bright's claim, and it is mainly, I think, on that ground that he who never hesitated to speak his mind, who did not always pick his words, and cared little about giving offence, has left behind so little painful recollection of past quarrels.

For if he spoke often in anger, it was anger inspired by public considerations, not by private resentment or interested motives ; passion was in his words, but not malice or malevolence. He denounced, but he did not sneer. He gave hard blows, but he was prepared to take them in return. The fighting instinct was strong in him ; but there has seldom been an Englishman yet, whatever his theory of life might be, to whom a fair stand-up fight was altogether distasteful or who did not respect pluck even when shown in a cause opposite to his own.

Of Bright, in his character of an orator, there is nothing to be said that is not familiar and even commonplace. By common consent he stands in that capacity among the foremost—many will say the foremost—of the generation, and even of the century, in which he lived. His manner of speech was, I believe, the result of long-continued study and practice, and it accomplished the highest result of art, for the art was not apparent. I do not know a purer style, one more absolutely free from affectation of phrase, from commonplace, from discursiveness, or from superfluity of words. He is the one authority who will always be appealed to by those who contend that classical models are not required for the formation of an English style of writing or of speaking. But it is to be remembered that if he was not familiar with the literature of Rome and of Greece, the English epic of Milton was his favourite study ; and when all is said, style depends less on what a man has read than on what he is. He must, of course, know his own language well—it is the tool he has to work with—but directness, brevity, emphatic diction where the subject demands it, satire and impassioned eloquence, are qualities which cannot be acquired. Skill and readiness in public argument, what we call debating power, is an art which most men of fairly acute intellect, and not too sensitive fibre, can acquire by the help of practice and training ; but the orator is like the poet, he must be born such, he cannot be made. I do not think that men in future times will look back to the speeches of Bright, as we do to those of Burke, for wide

and thoughtful generalisations which retain their value when the subjects which call them forth are dead and buried, nor for finished models of rhetorical skill such as those of Canning, nor yet for epigrams and turns of phrase such as Lord Beaconsfield was accustomed to throw off, though I do not say that any of these distinctive marks are absolutely wanting. But the oratory of Bright was what Parliamentary and popular oratory should be, and what that of Burke emphatically was not, directed to the object of the moment; practical, simple, meant to convince rather than to dazzle or to amuse, the speech of a man who had action in view, not the literary exercise of a rhetorician.

I have heard, during forty years of Parliamentary life, many famous speeches, but among the two or three most remarkable which remain in my memory is that delivered by Bright in the early days of the Crimean war. He had everything against him, for he spoke to an audience never in those years very friendly; he spoke at a moment of great popular excitement, and in opposition to the general sense of both Parliament and the public; but the effect was such as no other man, with the possible exception of Mr. Gladstone, could have produced, and I doubt if any speech of a later date has equalled it in that respect. Not the least admirable quality of his eloquence was that, however impassioned, it was always grave and deliberate. I have heard a large class of speakers described as not knowing what they were going to say when they got up, not knowing what they were saying while they were on their legs, and not knowing what they had said when they sat down. That is no very rare type; but it was exactly the reverse of Bright. He could be thoroughly effective in reply, as we all know; but he was not ashamed, and wisely so, to meditate carefully beforehand what he meant to say, holding that respect, both to his audience and to himself, binds a speaker to deliver his message in well-considered terms, to know exactly what he means and to say it in the language most suited to impress his meaning.

When I speak of Bright as a statesman I touch on more delicate topics, but you will give me credit for doing so in no controversial spirit. There has been no man in our time who was so entirely faithful to the ideas which he set out, and to which he adhered to the day of his death. These were, as I think, mainly four: the benefits of democratic government, the folly of war, the wisdom of a free-trade policy, and the advantage (he would have said the duty) of treating religion as a thing apart and disconnected from the administration of political affairs.

As to the first of these, he had the good fortune, not common to pioneers in any cause, to see the accomplishment of his purpose. No one, I suppose, will deny that to him more than to any man the establishment of the actual franchise and the transfer of political power to the wage-earning classes are due. Other leaders may have accepted what they saw to be inevitable, but to him it was an object always before his eyes, an object of hope and confident expectation. That he has succeeded is certain. A later generation will pronounce on the effects of the peaceable revolution which he brought about. To us they can only be matters of speculation; but when the history of that movement is written, the name most prominent in connection with it will assuredly be that of Bright.

On questions of peace or war it is not in the nature of things that an equally decisive result should be obtained, because in that matter no State can regulate its actions solely by its own wishes. It is not always true between nations that it takes two to make a quarrel. When the state of Europe in this century is matter of historical record, it will be no slight set-off against the many undoubted gains of civilisation that a larger number of men than ever before in the world's history have been armed and kept ready for war without any one definitely assignable cause except international jealousy or greed. Those who have protested, however vainly, against that condition of things deserve from

posterity the honour which they have not always received from their contemporaries, and in that list not the least distinguished name will be the name of him of whom we are now speaking.

In regard to free trade, so far as England is concerned, we may fairly say that the victory rested with Bright ; that the personal credit must be divided pretty equally between him and Cobden ; and that, although opinion on the subject is probably less unanimous than it was twenty years ago, yet there is no reasonable probability of the national decision being reversed. Whether the example we have set will be followed in other countries it is yet too early to decide. I, for one, do not despair, but there is no shame in avowing that the early free traders were sanguine, as I imagine most successful leaders of opinion are and must be. Perhaps it is a kindly provision of Nature that we should all exaggerate the magnitude of the results of what we do, since without that wholesome stimulus we should seldom do anything, and the world would stand still. Perhaps, also, we are apt to be in too great a hurry, and to forget how slowly the great ideas that govern mankind are worked out. At any rate, this is certain, that if free trade has not spread over the whole civilised world, abolished pauperism, and brought peace in its train, as many people hoped forty years ago, it has exercised a powerful influence for good even in countries where it has been very partially and imperfectly developed, and the result of the English experiment has been so far a success that the opponents of free trade abroad have always endeavoured to separate their case from ours. They do not argue that it has failed in England ; they contend only that the position of England is peculiar, and that what suits us would not suit them. No doubt the more sceptical and despondent section of society have had something to say for themselves. Cynics might well be amused, and philanthropists despondent, when the great Republic which represented democracy and peace, and it was thought free trade, found itself involved in a gigantic civil war, and began to saddle its citizens with the additional

burden of a high protective tariff. But the war ended in triumph ; the debt which it left is being rapidly paid off ; internal peace has been restored ; and in dealing with a country of sudden and rapid changes, I do not see why we should despair of protection dying out on the other side of the Atlantic as it has done on this.

The last of the questions which I have mentioned as those to which Bright's life was devoted—the separation of secular and ecclesiastical concerns—is still undecided. I do not dwell on it for a reason which you will easily imagine—because it cannot be touched without exciting differences and provoking feelings which are not in place on such an occasion as the present. I say only this, that the view which Bright took was the only one which with his training and surroundings it was possible he should take ; that he was strengthened in it by the example of America and the Colonies, and by the fact that no one in the present day, when laying the foundations of a new community, would dream of connecting the State with any particular religious denomination, and that even in the Established Church itself the tendency to rely upon voluntary support is increasing in a marked degree. I neither utter a prophecy nor express a wish, but I think it is the judgment of most men that the tendency of the age is towards voluntarism ; and if I am right in that respect, John Bright undoubtedly might be claimed as a representative man.

I have mentioned America, and I think we should not ignore or pass over the warm, the almost passionately affectionate, interest which Bright always felt and displayed where the United States were concerned. He thought of them as of a greater, happier, and perhaps a better England, where, on a new soil and among a younger people, problems might be safely and easily worked out which are full of difficulty in an old country like ours. I believe that in displaying that feeling, though he had no diplomatic object in view, he did England a service, that he soothed the often irritated feelings of a sensitive people, and induced Americans to make one

exception to their too ordinary belief that among us they are misjudged and misunderstood.

I have not much to add, but there is one remark which the subject imperatively calls for. Bright, in his earlier life, was constantly and till the end often described as a demagogue. Well, if you take the word in its literal sense as meaning a leader of the people, he was one; but no politician has ever lived who was less ready to humble himself before the people, to flatter prejudices which he did not share, or to conceal opinions which might make him unpopular. We know the kind of popular champion who takes up a cause as soon as it seems likely to pay, who heads a crowd with immense determination so long as it cheers and follows him, but who hangs back the moment the cheers become faint and few. We have plenty of that sort, perhaps we could do with fewer; but not once only, but again and again, Bright showed himself willing to oppose the popular opinion of the day when he believed it to be wrong. You remember his attitude in the Crimean war, his sacrifice of office (though that cost him little) at the time of the Egyptian expedition, and his honourable refusal to join any movements, however popular, which did not commend themselves to his judgment. The question is not whether in any particular instance he was intellectually right, but that he was always ready to sacrifice to his convictions, not merely popularity, but that public confidence which all political men value, and which necessarily implies a general sympathy with the ideas of the day. Posterity judges by results. We are too near to the time of John Bright to be fair judges of his statesmanship; but some things we may say of him without hesitation or doubt—that for a quarter of a century he powerfully influenced the decisions of Parliament; that he was no cosmopolitan revolutionist, but a sincere lover of his country; that he was by the common judgment of mankind a consummate orator; and that to that praise, not slight in itself, he added the higher glory of being a thoroughly honest man.

LXXXVI

AGRICULTURE—FRUIT CULTURE

MANCHESTER: OCTOBER 21, 1891

You have asked me to open this Conference on the subject of fruit cultivation, and I have accepted the invitation very willingly, because the subject appears to me at least as worthy of serious attention as many which attract more notice and excite a warmer interest. Controversy—attack and defence—is always popular; discussion which is not controversial is apt to be thought dull, and so it happens that many questions of real importance get less attention paid to them than they deserve, because they cannot be used by politicians or journalists as missiles with which to pelt one another, or as weapons with which to fight the eternal battle of parties. It is notorious that our principal industry, that of agriculture, has not of late shared in the general prosperity; that land in many districts is almost, if not quite, unsaleable; that in all parts of England rent has fallen; that the farmer is often less able to pay a low rent than he was fifteen or twenty years ago to pay a high one; that land is being very largely laid down to grass in order to save labour; and that the younger farmer and the younger labourer are both disposed to throw up the game, and to try their chances either in great towns or in the Colonies. To inquire into the causes of that state of things is no part of our business to-day. In my opinion they are various, and no one can be made responsible for all the results that we see. I would only observe in passing that they may, in my belief, be mainly classed under four heads: (1) The increased and consequently increasing facilities of communication, which destroy the natural protection given to

native products by distance. (2) The demand of labourers everywhere for higher wages, better accommodation, and more of the pleasures and conveniences of life, which necessarily cost money. (3) A growing impatience for larger returns than land can give, and, I am afraid, an increasing preference for speculation over the slower processes of industry and saving. (4) A certain uneasiness and distrust of what Parliament may do, which leads many people to prefer investments which they can get out of at short notice, and which are less under the control of legislation than land is ; besides another feeling, nearly akin to that of which I have been speaking, which makes men desire rather to conceal than display their possessions—concealment being obviously impossible in the case of land. It seems only reasonable to expect that these tendencies will increase rather than diminish with the progress of time.

In assigning these causes I may be right or wrong, but about the facts which I state there is no dispute. And I say, therefore, without fear of contradiction, that every expedient which tends to increase the value of English soil, and leads to the profitable employment of labour upon it, deserves our serious attention. I think also it will be admitted that, if we can add to the diet of the English labourer, the farmer, and the poorer classes generally, a free use of food which shall be cheap, nourishing, wholesome, and agreeable, we shall be doing useful service. I am not a vegetarian either in theory or in practice, but I imagine that many persons who do not hold the vegetarian doctrine will think as I do, that in this country we are apt—at least those who can afford it—to look too exclusively to meat as a source of nourishment, and that both health and economy would be promoted in the case of many of us by a more mixed diet. Certainly on the Continent fruit is more used than here, where we are apt to treat it rather as a mere luxury than as an addition to our food resources.

The question may be asked, and it would not be an unreasonable one, why select Manchester as a centre for the

discussion of these matters, since South Lancashire, especially South-east Lancashire, is never likely to be the most suitable part of England for the growth of fruit? The answer, I think, is that we do not contemplate fruit-growing in great towns or in their immediate suburbs. We are not going to ask the Corporation to plant an orchard in St. Ann's Square, nor to ask manufacturers to grow strawberries on the roofs of their mills and sheds. But Manchester is a convenient centre for large districts in which the same natural or artificial obstacles to fruit-growing do not exist, and, without being too sanguine as to the future, we may look forward to a time when less smoke will be sent into the air, and when nuisances will be more effectually checked than they are as yet. The advantages of fruit-growing are obvious and on the surface. It creates a large demand for labour, because in that industry the human hand cannot be superseded by machinery; it may under favourable circumstances give an immense return per acre. The work connected with it is healthy, and inasmuch as fruit is not easily or usually transportable to long distances, or capable of being kept for a long time, it is less exposed to foreign competition than corn or grain of any sort. As to the return, no certain average can be taken where soil and climate vary so widely. The figures which I have obtained relate to Kent, and come from good authority. Strawberries are taken as giving a gross return of 27*l.* per acre, and a net return, after all expenses are paid, of between 6*l.* and 7*l.*; raspberries, 21*l.* gross return, and 7*l.* net profit; currants, 30*l.* gross, net 11*l.*; apples, plums, and cherries, 25*l.* gross return, net profit about 5*l.* But these last, especially apples, give no return for five years at least. The average of several seasons has been taken, so as to allow for losses as well as for exceptional gains. On the other hand, there are drawbacks which must not be overlooked. All cultivation is accompanied with a considerable amount of uncertainty, and some people indeed tell you that farming is a lottery, only with all the prizes left out; and in the case of fruit this is particularly so; for one frosty night, or two or three days of

stormy weather in the late spring or early summer, will often destroy the whole promise of the year. Then there is the immense fluctuation in price, so great that a very abundant crop may be almost unsaleable. In Kent this year, to my own knowledge, plums were being sold far below the price it must have cost to raise them. There is the risk of plunder by tramps, vagrants, and mischievous boys, entailing the expense and trouble of constant watching; there is the difficulty of cheap transport where small quantities are concerned, the difficulty of storing up for future use what is essentially perishable; and also, what is more important, the difficulty of learning how to practise an art which looks simple enough, but which really requires considerable skill and experience.

Two other considerations are also to be borne in mind—one, that where fruit trees are concerned there must be a considerable interval of time between the planting and the remunerative return; the other, that to some extent the price of fruit is liable to be kept down by the quantity which is grown for pleasure rather than for profit, and the surplus of which is thrown on the market. I have read and heard expressions of opinion from which it would seem that the writers or speakers imagine that fruit can be grown by anybody anywhere—that you have only to get your five or ten acres, no matter in what soil, stick in trees or plants, and make your fortune by watching them grow. Now, I need not tell you that anybody who starts with these expectations will find himself greatly deceived. In the first place, the soil must be carefully chosen. In the next place, the grower must know something about his business. Then, again, if he wants to sell beyond the limits of his own parish, he must have easy and inexpensive transport. And with all these advantages there remain the risks of which I have spoken. In the southern counties, in Kent especially, fruit-growing has been studied as an art, I may say for centuries. The orchards and gardens of Kent are spoken of by travellers with admiration as early as the seventeenth century; and though the growers as a class are fairly prosperous, I do not imagine that their average

profits are especially high. The large gains of one year are balanced by the losses of another.

As to land being obtained for the purpose, there need be no trouble. There is plenty of land vacant, as we all know, and landlords will be glad for their own sakes to encourage an industry which will increase the demand for it. The question what size of farms will pay best for this kind of cultivation is one which I think only experiment can decide. Very large farms are, of course, out of the question where minute industry is required. But as between moderate-sized holdings and very small ones, the large holder will have the advantage of skilled supervision, of cheaper conveyance, and of a better market; and if his capital is, as it ought to be, in due proportion to his acres, he will be better able to bear the losses to which he will from time to time be exposed. How far these advantages may be counteracted by the superior energy which a man is supposed to put forth when he is working directly for himself is a comparison which anybody can make, and no two persons will come to the same conclusion. But of one thing I am assured—that no man can wisely go into this business who is not prepared to incur some expense in the first instance, and to run some risk later on. The labourer may envy the farmer; but the labourer is sure of his wages, and the farmer is not sure of his crop, nor yet of the market if he has a crop to dispose of. And I add further that it is a delusion to suppose that a man is doing good to his neighbours by farming or by carrying on any other industry at a loss. He may for the moment increase the amount of wages which are paid in his immediate locality, but he is diminishing the stock from which those wages are to be paid hereafter, and so stimulating a demand which he cannot satisfy. That warning may seem superfluous; but the English mind is more speculative than cautious, and we often hear it said of some one whose enterprises have come to grief from financial causes that he has done more good to his neighbours than to himself. The fact is he has done no good to anybody.

I do not forget that there is a class—whether large or

small I cannot judge—of persons who take to fruit-growing as an amusement and an occupation rather than with any notion of making it pay. Of them one can only say that, as they expect nothing in the way of profit, they will not be disappointed, and that they have found an excellent mode of utilising their spare time and superfluous energy—quite as wholesome as kicking a ball about a field, and, I should think, much more entertaining. If a man cultivates his own land, and has paid for it, he is, of course, in the most satisfactory position. I say if he has paid for it, for otherwise mortgages are apt to be a heavier burden than rent. And if he has not capital and prefers to hold on a lease, I would say, let him be very careful, and let the land-owner be so likewise, as to making clear and definite terms. I am quite sure that when disputes occur between landlord and tenant they arise, in nine cases out of ten, not out of a wish on either side to overreach the other, but from the easy rural fashion of letting things go on without a distinct and definite agreement as to the rights of both parties, but on the basis of some vague understanding which is apt to end in misunderstanding. That caution applies to other matters besides fruit, but it is obviously more necessary where the expense incurred in planting is large, as it must be in the case of fruit trees. The best plan would be, if the landlord could afford it, that he should put in the trees himself, charging in the rent for interest on his outlay. If he cannot, or will not, go to this expense, there should be a well-defined agreement as to what the tenant shall receive in case of going out.

I do not know that I need trouble you with any further preface, and I shall now leave the subject in the hands of gentlemen who have more practical acquaintance with it than I can lay claim to. I ought to have said something before as to the admirable exhibition which we have witnessed in this building. I have not had an opportunity of giving it more than a rapid and hasty glance, but I have seen enough to show me that the promoters of this exhibition were fully justified in their enterprise, and have attained the object with which it was under-

taken. I do not know that I ever saw in any part of England a finer display of fruit, and I doubt if anywhere I have seen one quite so fine. Do not think me over-cautious or inclined to throw cold water on what is an undoubted success, if I remind you that to produce magnificent specimens of fruit—though it is very desirable as showing what can be done—is not in itself sufficient. It is not enough to show that we can grow in England some of the finest fruit in the world. It requires also to be shown—if what we are doing is to be a serious business and not merely an amusement—that it can be done so as to give the grower a fair and reasonable profit. On this subject I hope we shall have more information than it has been in my power to supply.

THE END







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